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JOHN MILLER GRAY

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JOHN MILLER GRAY

MEMOIR AND REMAINS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS
1895

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PREFACE

THIS little book is the outcome of a desire on the part of his friends for some permanent memorial of the life and work of one who was not only regarded by them with feelings of high esteem, but whose attractive personality inspired warm affection in those who knew him best. The few pages which deal with his biography are the brief record of a career cut short before it had attained the plenitude of its power: still, there was more than promise; there was performance of a very substantial kind, performance which would certainly have led to wider recognition and higher preferment had life been spared.

No attempt has been made to write an

elaborate memoir; such indeed would have been out of place. But some of his more intimate friends (to whom all courteous thanks are due for their trouble) have written of him as he appeared to them in personal intercourse, and from other points of view: a chapter, too, has been added, indicating to some extent the work which he was able to accomplish.

In selecting the articles for reproduction regard has been had not merely to their individual excellence, but also to their representative character. In papers like those on the "Holiday in Arran," and "The Old Edinburgh Street," the author's power of descriptive writing is well exemplified; his knowledge of history and portraiture is seen in the article on "Pinkie House"; his critical ability displays itself in the reviews of the works of his favourite writers, and the lecture on engraving shows how he had educated himself in its technical

processes, a familiarity with which was of value to him in the discharge of his duties.

Thanks are due to the proprietors of the *Academy* and the *Magazine of Art* for liberty to reprint the articles which originally appeared in those Magazines.

J. BALFOUR PAUL.
W. R. MACDONALD.

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PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

By Mrs. M. M. TURNBULL

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

LOOKING back to those early times when John Gray, my brother, and I were children together, there is much that is vague and misty; but one vivid picture detaches itself, and remains clearly imprinted on my memory. It is that of two figures, seen almost every day, but full of pathetic contrast even to a child's unheeding eyes. One, an old man, with face lined and wrinkled, his shaggy eyebrows overhanging deep-set thoughtful eyes, his expression grave but not unkindly; slightly lame, he leant heavily on a stick, while beside him there walked a small fair boy, the child of his old age, and his inseparable companion.

His mother had died at his birth, and I recall the childish wonderment with which I heard the servants talk, of how as a baby he was not expected to live, how he was wrapped in wadding, and indeed owed his life to the

care and devotion of his old nurse Jeanie. Even then that delicacy was plainly visible, a quite uncommon fineness marking him out from the ordinary child. His hair of a light brown colour waved thickly over smooth high temples, his skin and complexion were exceedingly fair, and one eyelid, the right one, drooped heavily over that eye, half hiding it, and giving a dreamy expression to the face.

This must have been about the year 1857, when he was seven years old. We had come to live in Edinburgh, and they were our next-door neighbours in Craigie Terrace. A mutual passage ran between the back gardens, into which two doors opened—doors that generally stood open—so that the little fellow could run out and in, joining us in our play, borrowing our story-books, and evidently rejoicing in the companionship of children about his own age. When my pet chaffinch—Jacky Doodles by name—died (it is to be feared of hunger), my remorse found vent, as many an older person's has done since, in an elaborate funeral. Of course, Johnny Gray was formally invited, and appeared, solemn and sympathetic, at the obsequies in the back garden.

As time went on my brother used to amuse himself painting landscapes in water-colours from copies, and our little neighbour immediately set to work too. Each production of my brother was carried off next door, to be copied in even more uncertain and fainter lines, and these efforts were duly submitted by an anxious, expectant little face, for the elder boy's verdict. Thus, happily eluding the drudgery of drawing and perspective, he made his first plunge into art.

Then, too, he entered the enchanted land of romance, by the gateway, for him as for so many, of the Waverley Novels. We had a nice old edition, with illustrations by Turner and Cruikshank, and these volumes he borrowed in turn down to 'Count Robert of Paris,' for his father (who was a grave, austere man, belonging to the Quaker persuasion) did not possess works of fiction, though he appears to have allowed his son to read them.

He and my brother both went to Mr. Munro's school in Middleby Street, Newington; and from what he afterwards told me, his favourite class was that of English literature, taught by Mr. Crabbe, a man of fine

discrimination, with a faculty for leading his pupils to recognise and love the true and beautiful in poetry and literature generally.

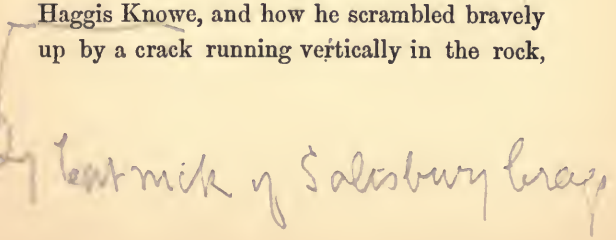
One morning there was great consternation in the school, as news spread of the failure of the Western Bank. On retiring from business Mr. Gray had invested his fortune, some six or seven thousand pounds, mostly in shares of that Bank, and on him and his son the blow fell heavily. Calls had to be met, and any other property had to be sold to meet them. He and his son were ruined.

The sterling character of old Mr. Gray had rendered him much respected not only by his friends in Edinburgh, but by others in England. They rallied round him in his time of trouble, and raised a fund sufficient to purchase back his house and furniture and to provide a slender provision for his remaining days. So father and son continued to live on in Craigie Terrace, and the faithful and resourceful Jeanie eked out the small income by taking boarders, declaring at the same time she would take no wages if such were not forthcoming.

This sad reverse of fortune undoubtedly changed the whole course of John Gray's life.

It deprived him of a University career, and even his schooling was curtailed; for while still a boy he went to serve his apprenticeship in the Newington Branch of the Bank of Scotland, an opening offered by a kind friend, and gratefully accepted by his father, but one unutterably repugnant and irksome to him.

Before this happened we had removed from Craigie Terrace; and though the distance to Blacket Place was not far, we did not see so much of our little playmate. He still came and went with story-books, and water-colour copies, and joined us on Saturday afternoons in long rambles over Arthur's Seat and the Salisbury Crags. On one of the slopes we had found a natural cavern, made by a huge rock, resting on a smaller one. Here we played at Robinson Crusoe, or brigands, or whatever was wild and adventurous, and here the smoke of our fire discovered us—choking and with smarting eyes—to the Park Ranger, by whom we were summarily evicted. My brother remembers how he and some school companions dared him to climb up a steep rock on the Haggis Knowe, and how he scrambled bravely up by a crack running vertically in the rock,



and with nothing to hold on by, a feat none of the others would attempt.

This shows that though a delicate and fragile boy, he was not wanting in pluck and courage.

His disposition too was extremely sweet and gentle; for I have no memory, either in those early days, or onward to the end, of ever seeing him cross or ill-tempered, or of ever hearing a harsh or unkind word fall from his lips.

As time went on, changes came, and we left Edinburgh, and only occasionally saw or heard of the blithe companion of our youthful escapades, who was now 'cribbed, cabined, and confined' in the dreary Bank. He did the work with scrupulous care and diligence, though he had neither aptitude nor liking for it; and perhaps it taught him one good lesson, that extreme accuracy, which, along with his Quaker precision and neatness, always characterised him. But when the day's work was over he was at liberty. Then, a friend tells me, he wrote an essay which gained a prize of £2, 2s., by which he gleefully told her he had earned a pair of boots. Then he read Tennyson, Carlyle, and Ruskin: 'Modern

Painters' he got from the Philosophical Institution Library, and studied with the greatest care, making copious notes, and many fine pencil drawings of the illustrations.

Every matter that touched on Art attracted him, and thus he trained himself, in his leisure hours, to be the discerning critic he afterwards became.

MANHOOD

WITH the exception of a visit he paid us in the winter of 1870, shortly after the death of his father at the ripe age of eighty-five, we did not see much of John Gray till, by a happy chance, we met in Paris in the summer of 1874. I shall never forget that June evening, as we sat in the courtyard of the old Hotel du Louvre, and suddenly caught sight of his slight figure springing with light alacrity up the steps towards us, his face aglow, his eyes beaming with pleasure and excitement; nor yet the next morning in the Louvre Galleries, to be followed by many others, when he would expatiate on his favourite pictures, and quote Rossetti's Sonnets before Giorgione's 'Pastoral,' and Leonardo's 'Vierge au Rochers.' But best of all was one long summer day we spent together at Chartres.

Leaving Paris in the early morning, the train whirled us through the rich cornlands of the Beauce, to that grandest and most impres-

sive of Cathedrals, Notre Dame de Chartres. What admiration it woke in him!—the great portal, with its rows on rows of solemn kings the massive pillars like banded forest trees, their bases smooth and blunted, 'worn by the passing waves of humanity,' he quoted; the delicate carved work round the choir, with the little doors of black oak; the sense of vastness; and most of all, the deep rich colouring of the stained glass, through which the sunshine filtered iridescent on the grey old stonework. Our behaviour was so reverent that the young verger would not believe we were not 'bons Catholiques;' and after showing us the Crypt, he took us up to the tower to ring the Vesper Bell. Here, to our amazement, he leapt on one of the large bells, and swung it backwards and forwards by the impetus of his body, while our ears were deafened by the clang. In coming down we lost our way, and while in the long double roof a tremendous crash of thunder broke overhead, shaking the huge pile to its foundations. John Gray often referred to that happy day as 'one of the good things that never come twice in this world.'

He was then a vegetarian, though not a strict one, for he ate fish and eggs; and this

was not from principle, but simply from a distaste he took to animal food. He still retained the delicacy and fineness of his boyhood, but his face had become more sensitive, more expressive, the thin veil of flesh, scarcely veiling spirit, 'that subtle thing,' of which he was so largely compact.

George Mac Donald's writings had inclined him to mysticism, and he was a student of Jacob Böhme. Of a volume by Harris, lent him by Dr. Pulsford, he says: 'I did not find so much that "my soul could sing in tune to" as in dear old Behmen.'

His admiration for Browning had then begun, and it was in Paris he bought for me the Tauchnitz selection of his poems, marking his special favourites, and kindling in me a like enthusiasm. Then, as ever, his sympathy was keen and true, and his sensitive nature answered with genuine responsiveness to every passing mood. His manner was one of tender courtesy, and he had a rare consideration for the feelings and opinions of others. How gently he would correct an error in taste or judgment, or a misappreciation, with 'Come now, you really don't mean to say you like that!'

'Gently comes the world to such as are cast in a gentle mould,' was indeed true of him.

A passage from a letter written after his return shows how he regarded the Bank and his work there: 'I did not take very well to work at first after my return, after having had twenty-two and a half actual days of idleness and liberty, but there was plenty work to do, and I have got my neck pretty well under the yoke again by this time.'

After this we corresponded regularly, and his letters reflect with delightful frankness the course of his life; the friendships he made, the books he read, and the various 'scribblings' that engaged him. He also formed the excellent habit of spending the May Bank Holiday with us, coming as he said with 'the primroses in the primrose wood, and the greening of the willows,' and learning to love our open, wind-swept border country.

In 1874, too, his 'Hour in an Old Library' was published, and though only in the humble sheets of *The People's Friend*, how proud we both were of this firstling in its dignity of print. He had visited my brother near Bamborough the year before, and afterwards

recorded his impressions of the Castle Library, along with his own sad, poetic imaginings.

This first success encouraged him to go on, and gradually he became a regular contributor to the *Edinburgh Courant* of Reviews of Books, Notices of Art Galleries, etc.

In August 1876 his 'Notes of a Holiday in Arran' appeared in that paper; and speaking of these a year or two ago, he said to me, 'I consider them the best things I have ever done.'

But the great event of 1876 was the beginning of his friendship with Browning. It was at the suggestion of Dr. John Brown that he sent a copy of his review of 'Pacchiarotto' (published in the *Courant*) to the author. His letter telling me of it gives a pleasant side-glimpse of the inimitable author of *Rab*.

'He (Dr. J. Brown) said it "would warm the cockles of the gruffish heart of the great-browed, great-bearded man." I got such a nice letter in reply from Browning from Lamlash, where he is staying just now. I felt inclined to rush down at once and see him, but restrained myself.'

Were I to quote all the interesting bits of autobiography contained in my pile of letters,

the chapter allotted to me would grow into a 'Life,' so I pass over the next year, and his visit to London, when he 'saw "R. B." in the flesh,' 'got a kind note from Burne Jones to see his studio,' etc. etc., to a letter he wrote me—evidently in high spirits—after his holiday in the South, and recording the rise of another distinguished friendship:—

'30*th Sept.* 1878.

'. . . I have been wishing for a long time to hear from you, how you are all getting on, and hoping for a letter—standing indeed on my dignity in not writing you! for I have a lot to tell you about my holidays. And standing on one's dignity is an uncomfortable posture, so I hereby give it up. Well. I had a grand time of it—away about sixteen days in all. First a week in London staying with my friend Wedmore, seeing all the artistic sights to be seen in London, and having the most artistic conversations thereon in the evenings. Meeting too no end of artistic and literary swells—Arthur O'Shaughnessy among the rest, and of course visiting Burne Jones' studio and calling on *my friend* Robert Browning, and his charming

elderly sister. After the week in London I went down to Oxford, saw the boat race (the Oxford one), and made the acquaintance of *Walter Pater!* I saw him twice, lunched in company with him, his two sisters, and their cat—which by this time has become quite a classic creature to his clique, and he (*Pater*, not his *cat*) took me to see some grand painted windows at Christ Church Chapel designed by Burne Jones. Then I saw Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" in Keble College Library, went through a good many of the Colleges, visited an exquisite old Norman Church at Iffley, a mile from Oxford. But best of all, I went through Ruskin's rooms at Corpus Christi. I wish I had time to tell you all I saw there, hope to do so at some future time. He has among other grand things a most glorious Titian portrait—an old white-haired Doge of Venice. Altogether I enjoyed this my second visit to Oxford even more than I did my first. Leaving Oxford, I had a week quietly at Pangbourne, a beautiful fishing village on the Thames, four miles above Reading. I was quite alone, and spent my time in reading, writing, rowing on the river, and taking long walks exploring the fine

wooded lanes, and quaint little villages in the neighbourhood. Time—last week of May and first of June. All about myself. Well, letters *have* to be that, chiefly. And just retort in the same fashion—by giving me a long letter all about yourself. . . . What are you reading, doing, thinking? There is a question the answering of which admits of much scope! . . . As usual, I am up to the ears in work of one kind or another, not a moment to spare.

'Enclosed is a paper from the August *Macmillan*, which I should like you to read and give me your opinion of—if you have not already seen it. It seems to me wonderfully delicate and tender and finished—no less *true* than *ideal*. . . .'

This was Pater's imaginary portrait, 'The Child in the House,' for which he had an especial liking—one that years only strengthened. It seemed to touch some chord of memory, or early association, and he would speak of it in the same soft low monotone in which he would recite 'Abt Vogler,' 'Fears and Scruples,' and 'Never the Time and the Place,' his favourite short poems from Browning, and Rossetti's 'Blessed Damozel.' This letter was written from 25 York Place, for in

the spring succeeding his father's death he and Jeanie left the Craigie Terrace house for a flat in Oxford Street. There his faithful nurse and friend died, and after a brief sojourn in 13 Lothian Road (which was his first introduction to his landlady, Mrs. Warden, with whom he resided, though at different addresses, for the rest of his life) he removed to York Place. In his rooms there what delightful evenings I have spent, as one after another he brought out his newly-acquired treasures. How daintily and lovingly his fingers handled a first edition, or a rare print, and how generously he would even lend these cherished possessions to a friend; and what pains he would take to expound and explain their hidden beauties and special virtues. Nowhere did he show to such advantage. He threw off all reserve, giving full play to his genial warm-hearted nature.

As the talk grew livelier, bright flashes of humour peeped out to the accompaniment of merry laughter. For he had a laugh peculiarly his own, not 'loud and deep,' indeed, rather high-pitched, but with a genuine hearty ripple, that never lost the careless pure ringing note of a boy's. I might give many examples of this 'perfect gift of

humour,' as Louis Stevenson somewhere calls it, from his letters, but many of the touches are personal, though I may add never unkindly.

Here are one or two, however :—

'What a grave paragraph that in your letter was, called forth by ——, and what a sweeping assertion that all men and no women are changed by marriage. I am doubtful about its truth, at least I have not observed it with the unvarying uniformity which you notice. But no doubt marriage is a greater change to a man. Women are naturally so domestic, but domesticity is at best an acquired habit in a man. Well, fortunately, I am in no need of your "solemn deliverance" and warning. Extreme poverty —combined with extreme caution—put marriage quite out of the sphere of practical politics, so far as my life is concerned. And really I don't want to undergo the change which you predict, or to lose my old familiar faulty personality by marriage, conversion, death, or any of the popularly accredited methods of so doing. I distrust them all.'

'Dr. M'Intosh's paper in *Encyclopædia* was on the reptile Leech, mine on the artist Leech —necessarily a much less important matter!'

CONGENIAL WORK

THOUGH his work in the Bank was performed with scrupulous care, he often expressed his extreme distaste for it; so when in 1880 we chanced to meet S. C. Hall in London, and to hear soon after that the post of sub-editor of the *Art Journal* was vacant, his claims were put forward. After some correspondence, however, the project fell through. He writes of it thus:—

'12*th January* 1881.

'That certainly was a good chance lost—the sub-editorship of the *Art Journal*. The salary would have been magnificent—more than twice what I have now. Still, the work would have been greatly of the nature of *business;* no doubt there would have been a good deal of anxiety. . . . It is at any rate well to look on the dark side, now that the chance has escaped me. I still cherish the hope of finally getting some

Art Journalism in London. Prospects of advance in all but the higher departments of banking—which I can never hope for—get daily more dismal.'

One result only remained. He had a kind letter from the new editor asking him to contribute to the reconstructed journal whenever he chose. In this year we conjointly became members of the 'Browning Society,' sharing the copies of the 'Proceedings,' etc., between us. He meant to collate the various readings in 'Pippa Passes'—from the rare, old, double-columned first edition he was so proud of, but whether he ever completed this I do not know.

Next year, 1882, was a busy one for him. Gratified by the praise his 'Manson' volume had received, he was working strenuously at his 'Life of David Scott,' determined to spare no pains to make it complete. In May he was saddened by the death of Dr. John Brown, and his August letter records other friendships—those of W. B. Scott and William Sharp. The latter's poems he finds 'very good—not at all influenced by Rossetti, which is curious and promising, arguing a strong individuality.' Next he was reading

Carlyle's Life—a 'very grand book,' and he gives me these hitherto unpublished particulars of a very notable last meeting:—

'16*th December* 1882.

'About Browning . . . He knew Carlyle well, and respected him greatly, and liked him personally. He told me he called shortly before the old man's death. He was asleep at the time, and his niece took Browning in to see him, and that was the last look he had of the grand old face. He seemed to be much annoyed with Froude's various publications—the Reminiscences, at any rate. He seemed to think that they gave an impression of Carlyle untrue to that which he personally made. No doubt Browning would have that pity of which you speak for a nature not healthy all round. Certainly he, if any one,

> "Lives and likes life's way,
> Nor wishes the wings unfurled
> That sleep in the worm, they say."

He is one of those of whom Emerson speaks, "Free from dyspepsia, to whom a day is a sound and solid good." Does not that express the thing squarely and concisely?'

The disappointment of the lost sub-editorship was not to last long, neither was he

destined to find, to quote his own words, 'congenial work, which—more than most things—is true success in life,' in Art journalism in London, but in his own dear familiar Edinburgh.

What pleased him specially in his appointment as Curator to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery was the recognition it brought him, and the appreciation it called forth from his now large and varied circle of friends,—'the capital testimonial from R. B., dated from the Val D'Aosta, also excellent ones from Pater, W. B. Scott, Wedmore, Skelton, Robertson-Smith, etc. etc., and from the leading R.S.A.s. The matter is being taken up most warmly by my friends, and by those here generally who are interested in Art, and I have good hope of ultimate success. There is a prospect, too, that the salary may be a decent one—for a bachelor at least, but this is still a little doubtful. (*N.B.*—Not the bachelor, but the fair salary.) There would be much work for the first year or two, but more leisure for literary effort after that.'

After this epoch in his life it is pleasant to note the happy tone of his letters, telling how the London men received him 'with open arms; in fact, like a curator and a brother!' How,

after a holiday, he 'settles down to work with great contentment.' And again: 'The way time flies would be terrible to think of had I not a quite fixed belief that as one gets older one certainly should—probably will—get happier. I 've found it so, as yet, at any rate.'

In 1885 this access of good spirits reached high-water mark, judging from his long and frequent letters, all written in buoyant humour. One, dated 15th April 1885, is so delightful, I only regret I cannot give it *in extenso.*

'I have been feeling, like you, a strong wish to fly to the sunny south, for the wings of a dove, or a wild goose, or the homelier domestic one, or any such available creature, to effect withal so desirable and pleasant a purpose. . . . While I was away my room has been getting painted. . . . I have not been able to call the colour-scheme of my room by any such fine name as Whistler adopts for his "arrangements." It is not a "Nocturne in blue and silver," or anything of that sort. I have chastely titled it "An Afternoon in Brown and Yellow, with occasional moments in Green." The pretty phrase — a poor one, madam, but mine own—has a certain attraction for me from its terseness and brief descriptive-

ness; but, you know, I always was a lover of finished style—my own—*and* other people's.

'Is there anything else to tell? Yes, I have been suffering from an attack of book-buying —one of a most virulent and rabid character. I marched into Paterson's the other day, and came out about *ten pounds* poorer. Really it was an exceptional chance . . . And on the most mature consideration I may perhaps neither have been rabid, nor virulent, nor anything of the sort, in the matter; for as there is every prospect of my losing all I have more or less — through "stocks and shares,"—that most typical quintessence and most ultimate and most obvious development on earth of Old Nick—"the least exalted fiend," etc. etc., see Mr. Milton,—probably my little transaction with Mr. Paterson was about the most rational investment I have made for some time past. It may have been a mere sober and sane attempt on my part to lay up treasure which, if worms may (to some extent) eat it, and moths (to some extent) corrupt, will at least not take the muckle *Divil's* wings to itself and fly away.'

After a digression to Vernon Lee—her 'Miss Brown and Euphorion'—he concludes:—

'What a long, odd scribble this is! Some tricksy sprite must have been perched on my quill all the while. Well, I hope you will excuse him—not me, the grave curator, whom you know, and that his cantrips may at least make you smile.'

In all his letters he only twice complains of 'want of money and leisure'—once when a visit to Italy had to be given up, and later on, when 'a trip to Spain was knocked on the head, chiefly from a want of funds.'

The visit to Italy was only deferred, for that dream of his life was to be realised in the spring of 1887. In the previous winter he made an attempt to learn Italian, but speaks thus disparagingly of his linguistic talent:—

'23*rd November* 1886.

'A young lady friend offers to coach me up in it (the language) before starting, and encourages me by reporting that last year *in three weeks* she poured enough Italian into another friend — rather a dull friend, she remarks, with an obvious bearing on the present case — to enable him to get on capitally all over Italy with the natives. Wonderful, is it not, but I am still most

doubtful as to myself. The books arrived to-day, and the very sight of them makes me sick. I have no turn at all for languages. Some remote ancestor of mine must have played a more than usually eminent part in that tower of Babel business, and so transmitted a double portion of his curse to his unfortunate descendant. A very bad affair indeed that ancient architectural effort!'

It is always a deep regret to me that we did not meet abroad. He was at Florence when we were in Venice, and wrote to me there, wishing we 'could have seen the great things together, and revived the memories of that pleasant time long ago in Paris.'

He goes on: 'We are looking forward to Venice as one other grand sensation yet possible in life, after all that we have recently experienced, one other thing yet 'left remarkable, beneath the visiting moon.'

Next spring he went no further than London, but had 'a good time there,' seeing his friends, etc. I shall only transcribe the account of his visit to Browning:—

'1*st February* 1888.

'One afternoon I spent a most delightful

hour with Browning and his sister. . . . They received me most cordially, like an old friend really, to say "with open arms" would be hardly a figure of speech. . . . He was telling me, too, about his new uniform edition which Smith, Elder, and Co. are going to publish. "You know, Gray," he says, "there will be nothing in it for *you*. The publisher wished me to revise and add some notes. But I can't make them any better. And, if you 'll believe me" (confidentially, laying his hand on my shoulder), "I think it 's best always to be like the Apostle, 'forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing on to those things that are before.' Not bad that for seventy-six, is it?"'

Of religion he did not often speak—nor shall I—for it was inextricably wrought into the texture of his life—that life so ordered, so full of charity (in its large sense), so almost cloistral in its purity, its peace, and its loneliness. For lonely he was, with no near and dear relation in the world, though with a wealth of friends outside. Two quotations, however, will indicate his attitude of mind:—

'I feel with you entirely in what you say about Browning's hold on immortality, and

the comfort that he gives in these sadly shaken times.

"He, at least, believes in soul, is very sure of God."'

And again:—

'I have not yet seen "Robert Elsmere," and somehow don't feel much attracted by it. Its main interest seems to be a religious one, and really one must consider that matter as *settled* at some period of one's life.'

In the spring of 1887 he made his final move to 28 Gayfield Square. Two years later he had a severe attack of influenza, which left him 'ill and feeble for a full year,' and after this he often complains of feeling poorly, and of a want of energy and pleasure in his work. His sensitive heart was much saddened by the loss of friends, and he reiterates the need of 'clinging closer to those that are left,' and of 'working while it is day, for the night cometh.'

Still this never prepared me for the bolt out of the blue, which turned the blaze of March sunshine into blackness, ending with one sharp final blow a friendship perfect in its unbroken serenity, its loving helpfulness, and tried strength.

WORK IN LITERATURE AND ART

By J. BALFOUR PAUL

LYON KING OF ARMS

WORK IN LITERATURE AND ART

JOHN GRAY'S love of literature was inborn: at an age when to his more robust contemporaries school games seemed the greatest interest in life, his delight was to wander, solitary but unwearied, in the flowery meads of romance under the guidance of the Wizard of the North. Nor were more solid pursuits neglected. Like most boys of an inquiring turn of mind, he dabbled in chemistry, and no doubt burst the usual number of glasses and burnt the ordinary number of holes in the carpet, though owing to his natural neat-handedness he probably made fewer mistakes than most juvenile experimenters. But it was not as a scientist that he was to become distinguished; it was literature that really claimed his early affections; and he read so much, and profited so well by what he read, that when as a lad of eighteen he entered the Young Men's Literary Society in connection

with the Newington U.P. Church to which his father belonged, he was well equipped for taking part in its debates and criticism. It is on record that his first speech was made in defending the thesis of the advantages of a town life over a country one, a subject on which he probably spoke with conviction, as the stimulus of society and the quickening influences of congenial companionship were always more to his mind than the beauty of landscape; though, on the other hand, his innate artistic sense made him fully alive to the enjoyment of the latter also. Then followed essays on many subjects. He discussed in turn the poetical merits of Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, the last a poet for whose writings he had always a special love, and whom he afterwards came to know as a personal friend. In his study he wrote much and tried his hand at various styles of composition—tales, sketches, poems, were attempted in succession, few of them perhaps of more merit than might be expected of an earnest and thoughtful lad, and most of them tinged with a strain of pensive sadness, but all displaying a delicacy of touch and an accuracy of language which foreshadowed that rhythmic diction and flow of appropriate epithet

which characterised his later writing. His earliest poem which has been preserved, written in January 1869, when he was only eighteen, is evidently the work of a lonely and tender hearted-boy.

A LONGING.

Within my heart there is an ache,
To still it I've no art,
And nothing I can find will make
A rest for my poor heart.

Long I for name of those who teach?
Or pour forth artless lays?
Long I for praise as one who sings
Wearing half-withered bays?

. . . . . .

Love is of Heaven, but even there
My soul could never rest,
Nor with good things be satisfied,
Desiring still the best.

This hunger is for thee, O God,
Thou of man's soul the rest;
I will arise and go to Thee,
And then I shall be blest.

These lines are so evidently reminiscent of the religious training which he must have got at home, and of the influence on his mind of Scottish Psalmody, that they form an interesting trace of his mental development. But having passed through the period of verse-making, which lasted two or three years, that pursuit was laid aside, and probably never

resumed. His tastes lay more in the direction of pictorial art; and he must have begun at an early age to cultivate that affection for old prints which he never lost, for we find him in 1870 getting information from a correspondent in London as to the means of obtaining access to the Print Room of the British Museum, Albert Durer and Martin Schöngauer being specially recommended to him for study. It was in 1872 that he made his first appearance as an art critic, and indeed as a writer, by contributing a notice of the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition of that year to the *Perthshire Courier*. The description of the pictures and the criticism of the technical work of the various artists are written with ease and grace, and studded with quotations both in prose and verse, which show how he made his reading serve his requirements when writing, and how he had stored his memory with many an apt allusion.

He began the year 1874 by contributing a beautifully written New Year's article to the *People's Friend*, a paper in which some months later appeared another paper entitled 'In an Old Library,' a subject which possessed peculiar attractions for him, and which was the

result of a holiday spent near Bamborough Castle. In this year too he wrote his first art paper for the *Edinburgh Courant* at the beginning of the editorship of Mr. W. R. Lawson. It was on the Whistler Exhibition in London, and displays a very discriminative appreciation of the work of an artist whose canons of art were not so well understood then as they have subsequently become. His opinion is well summed up in the last sentence of the critique: 'Of human interest his works have generally very little, but they have their own special and peculiar charm as sensitive studies in grace of line and harmony of abstract colour.' Another paper which he contributed to the *Courant* was on the 'Lectures on the History and Practice of the Fine and Ornamental Arts,' by William B. Scott, a man whom he afterwards came to know intimately, and the life of whose accomplished brother he was destined to write. He had again an opportunity of criticising the pictures of the year in the Scottish Academy. This time it was for the *Dumfriesshire Herald* that he wrote; but it was the last of such critiques that he contributed to the provincial press. Mr. Lawson of the *Courant*, ever quick

to note and ready to encourage rising talent, had noticed Gray's capacity for writing easily and effectively on art subjects; and in 1875 six notices of the Academy Exhibition appeared in that paper from John Gray's pen, and till the *Courant* became defunct he invariably contributed these notices, besides many others, to its columns. It was for it too that he noticed in the last-mentioned year the works of several authors with whom he was to become more intimately acquainted in after life. He wrote, for instance, an appreciative notice of the exhibition of the works of George Manson, who had but recently died, and whose biographer he was ultimately to become. He wrote too a review of Browning's 'Pacchiarotto,'[1] a task which he did *con amore*, for he had always been much influenced by the poet's work. He probably felt that he had written it well, as he put his initials to the article, and sent a copy to Dr. John Brown, whose acquaintance he had made a short time previously. In acknowledging it, the genial Doctor wrote as follows:—

'23 RUTLAND STREET,
'*6th August* 1876.

'DEAR "JOHN GRAY,"—Thanks very much

[1] See p. 137.

—it is excellently done, keen and just and well worded; you have "the vision and the faculty." You should send the great-browed and bearded man a copy; it will warm the cockles of his gruffish heart. I am glad to know that line is his wife's. She is the greatest she-poet since Sappho, though I hate her "Aurora Leigh" as much as I love her lines on "Cowper's Grave." Thanks again. . . .'

Gray took Dr. Brown's advice and sent Browning a copy, which produced the following reply:—

'Blairbeg, Lamlash, Arran,
'*Aug.* 12, 1876.

'Dear Sir,—Your kind letter and criticism follow me to this beautiful island. I thank you exceedingly for what harmonises so well with the influences about me. I should be sorry, however, if you fancied that even in noisy London I am unduly "annoyed and disturbed" by the critics I had a moment's amusement with, this May day, for the first time—and last, probably. The particular little man I may have laid too rough a finger upon, has been—what he calls—castigating me these seven or eight years; and I only used

his own figure of speech by impressing my "castigator" what he might expect if he (still in a figure of speech) ventured within boot's reach of me, whom, in reality, he never saw, nor is likely to see. But a very little of this sportiveness serves its turn, and there shall be no more of it, I promise you.—Pray believe me, dear Sir, with repeated thanks, yours very truly, ROBERT BROWNING.'

Gray himself was in Arran in the summer of 1876 with his friend Mr. William Young, and has left us a graphic and picturesque account of a hardly earned and much enjoyed holiday. He was back ere long to the somewhat uncongenial but ever faithfully performed work of the Bank, spending his leisure hours in the cultivation of literature, and in making the beginnings of that interesting collection of objects of art which grew more and more valuable as it went on. 'Many a happy afternoon I spent with him,' writes one of his most intimate friends, 'collecting frames for pictures in the Canongate, Cowgate, Leith Walk, etc., and raking about old furniture shops for furniture, china (especially blue), and prints.'

In December 1876 he wrote for the *Courant* a Review of Mr. Wedmore's studies on English Art. As happened in other instances, this was the means of bringing him into direct communication with the accomplished author, an acquaintanceship which speedily ripened into warm friendship. When Mr. Wedmore came to Edinburgh in 1877 to deliver a lecture at the Philosophical Institution he stayed with Gray, and up to the last the intimacy thus begun was continued; it was also through his introduction that Gray first began to write for the *Academy*, contributing a notice of the Scottish Academy Exhibition to that periodical in 1878. He had indeed a rare faculty of making friends; his sympathetic nature caused men with whom he had anything in common to draw to him in a remarkable manner; and his appreciation of their work was not the mere undiscriminating adulation of an ordinary admirer, but the generous enthusiasm of a cultivated mind. Even as quite a young man he collected round him a circle of friends, all more or less devoted to literature or art; and there were three distinguished Edinburgh men whom he had set his heart on knowing, and of all of whom he ultimately became a warm friend.

One of these was Dr. John Brown, and we have seen that he had come to know him; another was Sir Noël Paton, whose work he much admired. Several of his pictures he had written about with enthusiasm in the *Courant*, but it was not till 1877 that he actually came into personal contact with him. The third of his desired friends was Mr. John Skelton, and with him also he ere long became acquainted; we shall afterwards see what the estimate was that was formed of the young writer by the accomplished historian of Queen Mary. It was in 1878 that he wrote his first Review of any of Shirley's works, contributing to the *Courant* a long and carefully written critique of the "Essays in Romance." It was in this year too that he began to correspond with Mr. Walter Pater, for whose finished style he had a great admiration. Mr. Pater on his side was not slow to recognise the talent and ability of his correspondent. Writing in 1878, he says—

'Many thanks for your charming fragments of criticism, which ought, I think, to go finally into some large and complete work of criticism. You seem to me to have real possession of many important principles — in

speaking of Whistler's exhibition, for instance —and unite them to a style which seems to me at once highly picturesque, finished, and temperate. Thank you also for your appreciation of my article in *Macmillan*—I value it much—the appreciation I mean. . . .'

The year 1879 found Gray gradually extending the sphere of his literary efforts. While continuing his contributions to the *Courant*, he wrote several articles for the *Academy*, and two papers—one on 'Edinburgh Literary Celebrities,' and the other on 'Scottish Art'—for the *Madras Mail*. For the first-named paper he wrote an appreciative notice of Browning's "Dramatic Idyls"; he sent this to the poet, who wrote in reply as follows:—

'My dear Mr. Gray,—Thank you very much for yet one other instance of your kindness and sympathy, both valued, I am sure, as they deserve. . . .

'For your two questions. The 'painful birth,' etc., is a merely general allusion to the fact that just at the beginning of the thirteenth century Art was revived in Siena (even before Florence), presumably under some such circumstances, to judge by the character of work

still extant, work of a singularly beautiful as well as saintly character. I localised the fact —that is all.

'"L'Ingegno," however, "The Genius," was a person of whom mention is made in the annals of art as so pre-eminent among the scholars of Perugino as to have obtained that distinguishing appellation, even with Rafael for a fellow-disciple. His master's preference is shown by the choice of Andrea Luigi of Assisi—such was his name—as his assistant in various important works—those in the Cambria at Perugia, some at Assisi, and eventually the paintings in the Sistine Chapel. But while still very young he was struck with blindness; and, incapacitated from the prosecution of his art, subsisted in his native Assisi on a sufficient provision generously allowed by the Pope, who had recognised his early promise, and thus he lingered out his life of eighty-six years.

'My sister thanks you for your kind remembrances of her, and repeats my own hope that we shall see you ere long.—Meanwhile and always, believe me, dear Mr. Gray, yours most truly, ROBERT BROWNING.'

The first time that Gray appealed directly to the public as an author was in his Life of George Manson, the inception of which is described elsewhere in this volume. It was the record of a short but gifted life, whose fair promise never attained maturity. The writer did his task with delicate sympathy and with thorough artistic appreciation. The book was received not only with favour, but with admiration. Dr. John Brown writes with cordial congratulation: 'It is perfect; it is *plus quam perfectum*. Yours is excellent. I do think you should send a copy to Ruskin.' Praise like this was no mere empty compliment; and there is no doubt that the Manson life gave its author a position and a reputation as a writer wider than he had hitherto enjoyed. For the *Academy* he wrote at this time a Review of Blake's life, by Alexander Gilchrist; and then he turned his attention to a man whose art exercised on him an almost equal fascination as did that of Blake, David Scott. He entered into communication with his brother, Mr. William Bell Scott, and in November there appeared in *Blackwood* an able article on the artist, an article which led the way to the publication a few years later of a volume with

a more extended memoir and specimens of Scott's work. The article was much thought of by competent judges, such as Mr. Walter Pater, who writes:—

'Thank you very much for your charming article on David Scott, which I have read with great pleasure and interest. . . . I hope you will do much more of such excellent work as that paper. I am very pleased to hear of your continued memory of and interest in my projected series of Imaginary Portraits, one of which I have now seriously on hand. I have been looking over it, but find it is still too much a matter of shorthand notes at present, or I would very gladly send it you, and should value your remarks upon it. . . .'

In March 1882 he contributed to the *Courant* a Review of Dr. John Brown's 'John Leech and other Papers,' and received the following characteristic note from the author:—

'Who are you? I fear you are John Gray. I am none the less grateful, but sugar, however refined, injures some constitutions. J. B. likes it, I fear, too much.'

Another article on the same subject in the *Academy* was acknowledged in much the same style by the genial essayist, but this was to be

the last of their communications. The shadow of death was looming very near, and a few weeks later the able and popular author of *Rab* passed to his rest. His friend who had so lately written of his works with so much loving appreciation now penned an obituary notice for the *Academy*, the concluding sentence of which sums up admirably his estimate of the man: 'The writings of Dr. Brown were the spontaneous outcome of his nature, and their tenderness and sympathy, their insight and humour, were the characteristics of his own individuality. There was a strange and winning charm about him which made itself constantly felt, and attracted to him all with whom he came in contact. In his prime he was a brilliant conversationalist; and even to those of us who knew him only in later life, and were permitted to spend many hours with him in the little smoking-room at the top of his house, the memory of these evenings, and of him who made them bright with his mirth and genial wisdom, will be preserved for ever as a treasured possession.'

It was in 1882 that he first began to write for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, contributing articles on Leech, C. R. Leslie, and John

Linnell; and he continued writing for that publication from time to time biographies of various eminent artists. He also wrote for the *Art Journal* a long and able article on George Reid, R.S.A., giving an account of his life and work. The beginning of the following year found him writing for the *Magazine of Art* and contributing to the *Courant* and *Academy* long and careful critiques of the Loan Exhibition of Old Masters which was held at Edinburgh in that year.

Gray's lifelong devotion to art was destined to receive some recognition. He had, as has been shown,[1] endeavoured without success to get an official connection with Art Journalism in London. But when it became clear that a Curator of the new Scottish National Portrait Gallery was to be appointed, his kind and valued friend, Sir Noël Paton, suggested that he should apply for the post. He did so, and sent in in support of his application a set of testimonials which must have amply satisfied the Trustees as to his fitness. Robert Browning said that in securing his services 'the new establishment will begin their labours auspiciously indeed, associating themselves, as they will,

[1] See p. 20.

with a gentleman whose literary ability is commensurate with his artistic discrimination —and may I venture to add?—with every advantage of bearing and manner that should accompany these.' Mr. Walter Pater expressed the high opinion he had been led to form of his ability and accomplishments. Mr. Frederick Wedmore bore testimony not only to his general knowledge of art and sympathy with it, but to his business qualifications and to the order and exactitude which showed itself in the arrangement of his own collection of prints. Mr. Skelton said it would be difficult to find a candidate better fitted for the post, in respect of his being at once a critic, a historical and antiquarian student, and a lover of art. Very similar testimony was borne by many others, among whom may be mentioned the editors of the *Academy*, *Art Journal*, and *Edinburgh Courant*, Sir Noël Paton, Sir George Reid, Professor Robertson Smith, Messrs. S. C. Hall, R. Herdman, R.S.A., A. S. Murray of the British Museum, W. D. Mackay, R.S.A., W. B. Scott, W. E. Lockhart, R.S.A., J. Lawton Wingate, A.R.S.A., Robert Gibb, R.S.A., etc. etc. With such a consensus of opinion there could be little doubt of the result. He

received the appointment, and entered on a sphere of life for which he was eminently fitted, and the duties of which he was so admirably to perform. From a monetary point of view indeed he did not gain by leaving the Bank, where he had served for seventeen years. He had performed his duties there faithfully and well, as was cheerfully acknowledged by his official superiors; but there can be no doubt that the work which now opened out to him was of a kind much more fitted to the bent of his mind, and he found it congenial and engrossing. There was much to be done, and he plunged into his new duties with ardour and enthusiasm. His habits of order and exactitude of which Mr. Wedmore spoke stood him in good stead, while his bright and winning presence made him an acceptable guest in the many houses which he had to visit in the execution of his duties.

The next few years were full of hard and earnest work. The getting together the nucleus of a collection of Scottish Portraits was no easy task. Many houses had to be visited, owners of pictures interviewed, and letters written, before the walls even of a temporary exhibition room could be furnished.

But in the midst of all this he still found time to contribute many articles on subjects of literary and artistic interest to various periodicals, besides bringing out a volume on David Scott and his works, which was as successful as his Manson book. He wrote a long and elaborate series of articles for the *Courant* on the Loan Exhibition of Scottish Portraits held at Edinburgh in 1884; and the following year he contributed two thoughtful and able critiques on 'Marius the Epicurean' to the *Academy* and the *Courant;* it was gratifying to him to find that these met the approval of the accomplished author, who on the 24th of March 1885 wrote him the following interesting letter:—

'My dear Mr. Gray,—It gives me extreme pleasure to know from your generous article on it in the *Academy* that my new book has not disappointed you—one of the most valued of my readers. Of three or four very friendly recognitions of my work, yours is the most complete, and it is a great encouragement to me to receive a criticism so kindly in what is itself so graceful a piece of writing.

'I was very glad to find in your letter of

Feb. 23rd that your office in the National Portrait Gallery was what you had hoped to find it, and wish all prosperity to your own literary and artistic work. Excuse this brief note. It seems gracelessly little after your good work and trouble for me, but I cannot delay these few lines of acknowledgment.—Always very sincerely yours,

'WALTER PATER.'

In 1887 Gray was able to carry out a long-cherished plan. In the spring of that year he, along with Mr. W. D. M'Kay, R.S.A., made a tour in Italy, visiting Rome, Venice, Florence, and other towns. It was a holiday he enjoyed to the full, and many happy hours were spent in the Picture Galleries—hours full not only of enjoyment to himself, but of education and information which were most useful to him in after years. His Journal contains much minute criticism of the things which specially struck him, and is illustrated by many slight sketches which served to fix these more accurately in his memory. Much as he found in the Museums to interest him, it was not in these only that he found pleasure; the whole country seemed to awake a responsive echo in his

breast: the warmth and brightness, the soft and taking manners, and the atmosphere of history which pervaded everything, all appealed to him strongly. The following passage from his Journal shows how acutely observant he was; and though he once said to the writer of these lines that on the whole he preferred a good picture to a good view, how acutely alive he was to all the small details of colour and form which go to make up a landscape:—

'Left Rome for Florence along with M'Kay at twelve on morning of Monday, 21st March 1887. It was a grey day, and we perhaps did not see the country to the very fullest advantage. First the dreary green stretches of Campagna with the Tiber and other smaller and equally yellow and sluggish streams; their sides and the slopes near them gleaming richly here and there with a pure white blossom like that of the black-thorn.

'The view of Lake——, particularly impressive in the effect we had: first the promontory jutting out into the lake with what looked like a square-towered fortress, but might be a church; and further to the left the domed church of ——, which, as the train passed behind it, formed, to the very point of its red-tiled tip,

the apex of a cone formed by the hill slopes on either side. Then came another wonderful stretch of the lake. A foreground of the very strongest green grass we have ever seen, with the yellow earth telling through it, and turning it to a rich goldenish tone, like an inner glow warming it through and through; a broad stretch of this wonderful green seen between sparse and thinnish brown (warm) tree-stems; beyond this the pale green of the shallow lake with a hue of yellowish sand showing through it; beyond that again a grey blue line of Appenines, and above them a tender grey sky with a hue or space, showing to left, of faint warmish yellow. Altogether a most strange and unusual combination of colour. Beyond this mulberry trees, and, on conical hills, old towns perched picturesquely as in the old masters' backgrounds.'

While most of the Journal is filled with critical and careful notes on the pictures in the various Galleries, he was by no means indifferent to the beauties of nature and the manners and customs of the people. He visited the graves of Keats at Rome, and Clough at Florence, from the latter of which he plucked some daisies to send to a friend

in Edinburgh. One evening at Florence he went with some friends to see a procession in honour of the Morte Gesu, and describes it as follows:—

'A most picturesque scene; the people very quiet and reverent, a long procession carrying an image of the dead Christ, the instruments of the Passion, and the Madonna. Many of them in white surplices and white handkerchiefs wound round their heads. Many girls with them carrying lighted candles. Drew up on the Square of the Ponte di Certosa, [?] and saw it passing. A glorious moonlight night; great variety of colour in the sky, the brilliancy of the moonlight bringing out the local colour of the tiles, etc., as I had never observed it before. The yellow light of the candles with which the windows and fronts were illuminated turned the white walls to a warm mellow, almost rosy colour, and brought out by the opposition of their yellow flame the full dark blue of the night sky. Our first real glimpse of the ways of the Italian peasantry, and altogether very memorable.'

One other extract from the Journal descriptive of his last day in Italy is too delightful to be passed over. The travellers are at

Bergamo, and are seeking rest after seeing the sights and galleries :—

'Returned to the "Trattoria Giardinetto," just outside the Porto S. Agostino, where I am now writing with a glorious view of the Alps before me to north and south over the red red roofs and white walls of the town, from a terrace shaded by great laurels, and with a vine trellis just breaking into tender green. Roses and peony-roses ready to blossom, and a fountain spouting pleasantly in the air, its rounded basin raised a foot or two on a single column, and planted with forget-me-nots in rich blue flower. Watched the view, and then walked down through the full-leafed avenue from market-place to station, the hills to the east, seen through the green foliage, tinted on their snow with a lovely rose-colour. Returned by railway; two clear-cut featured black-robed priests busied in the evening office of their breviary, and noble-faced woman with thin cheeks, straight nose, very short upper lip, white hair brushed from the fine forehead, and covered in nun-like fashion by a black woollen mantilla. Sunset of the full yellow and ruddy sky slumbrous and rich of hue with intensest purple and ruddy clouds

(like those of Millais in "Autumn Leaves" and "Sir Isumbras"), the great mass of Monte Rosa, and the pyramid of the Matterhorn, pale delicate blue against it; and before we reached Milan the steadfast stars had taken gradual and quiet possession of the heavens, and the poplars were flickering like grey and visionary shadows above the darker breadth of fields.'

His fellow-traveller, Mr. M'Kay, has kindly supplied some notes of this tour. He says: 'Gray was quite an ideal travelling companion; his knowledge of the cities and towns which we visited seemed inexhaustible, also of the origin and development of the various Art Schools of Italy. He had with him a small volume or couple of volumes by J. Addington Symonds concerning some of the smaller towns we visited. These he would read by snatches as we travelled, and be ready with all requisite information on our arrival at Verona, Bergamo, or Siena, as the case might be.

'Though fragile in appearance, Gray was light and active, and the amount of work he went through in Rome, Florence, and Venice was very great, as his notebooks well attest. We were both of us light on our feet; and

I sometimes recall with a smile our being called on to moderate our pace while walking along the Corso with a young Italian doctor. "It's easy seeing you two are from the North," he said, after keeping up with us for a while, "but just look how easily the folks about you are taking it!"

'His method on entering a church or art gallery was to take a hasty walk all round; then, having ascertained what the place contained, he would start, notebook in hand, writing diligently, and embodying the principal characteristics of the picture or statue in wonderfully few but very graphic words. Sometimes he would come to me and consult me on some point, or ask me to supplement his notes with a rough sketch.

'The galleries of most of the Roman palaces contain comparatively few fine pictures; and I can remember how, as we passed by scores of worthless canvasses, he used to sigh for "a judicious fire." In Rome our great disappointment was not being able to see the finest of the private collections, the Borghese Palace being closed owing to the death of a Princess of that house.

'Toward the end of our tour—in Venice—

he seemed to be feeling the strain of his incessant activity, so much so that he used to go to bed very early, between eight and nine o'clock, so as to be fresh for the work of the following day.

'He was always on the alert for anything bearing on Scottish portraiture, and both in Rome and Florence he seemed to light on a good deal to interest him in that way.'

He certainly enjoyed this experience of travel to the full, and Mr. M'Kay adds an interesting reminiscence of their last day in Italy: 'He seemed to revel in the glorious sunshine of that day, and I can remember how as we lingered over our Chianti under the trellised vines at the restaurant where we had lunched at Bergamo, with the glorious Lombard Plain spread out before us, he said to me in the fulness of his heart, "Surely life has nothing better to give," or words to that effect.'

His holiday over, Gray got back to work again, and threw himself into it with characteristic vigour and enthusiasm, and with a mind enlarged and cultivated by his experiences of travel. The *Courant*, to which he had previously contributed so much, having ceased to exist, he transferred his pen to the

columns of the *Scottish Leader*, a new Radical paper conducted with much enterprise. It is almost needless to state that Literature and Art, and not Politics, occupied his attention; in the latter indeed he was but slightly interested, and never professed any strong opinions; the strife of party and contention for power did not, as may well be imagined, appeal to his quiet and fastidious tastes. One of his earliest contributions to the *Leader* was a series of articles on the Art Treasures of Scotland, the first set of seven papers being on Newbattle Abbey. This was a kind of work peculiarly suited to his powers of graphic description and critical exposition, and his remarks on the family portraits and objects of art contained in the house are full of vivacity and interest. The next set of articles, which treated of Keir, were equally interesting in the detailed account which they gave of the treasures which had been from time to time accumulated by Sir William Stirling Maxwell and his ancestors. The third and last of the series which he contributed to the *Leader* was on Penicuik House; he evidently found this descriptive work extremely congenial to him, appealing as it did both to his sense of artistic beauty and histor-

ical association. We find accordingly that he wrote similar papers for the *Scottish Art Review* in 1889 on Pinkie House,[1] and for the *Art Review* in the following year a set upon Hopetoun. Immediately following this the editor of the *Magazine of Art* commissioned him to go to Warwick Castle and write a description of that noble building. Gray was always singularly reticent about the visits which he made to the great mansions of the country, as he had not a particle of snobbery in his composition; but when he could be brought to talk about it at all, it was evident that there were few visits which he enjoyed more than this. His host and hostess did the honours of the place delightfully, and were much pleased with the wide culture and unpretending manners of their guest. There is a letter from the Countess in which she says of the article on the Castle: 'The descriptions are so charmingly written, and bring it all before one so wonderfully, I who know it so well feel as if I had never read so picturesque or so faithful a description of it before. I seem to hear the sound of the waterfall and to smell the cool damp moss in the drive.'

[1] See vol. ii. p. 71.

When the article ultimately appeared, he was somewhat disappointed to find it much cut down and quite spoiled. This was the last article on a Mansion House and its contents that he wrote; but his busy pen continued to be busier than ever. He had quite earned a reputation as a graceful and brilliant writer and an art critic. Merely to enumerate the articles he wrote and the journals for which he wrote them would be to occupy an undue amount of space. The *Scottish Leader*, of course, had a large proportion of his contributions, but he was kept much occupied in writing biographical notices for *Chambers's Cyclopædia*; amongst other periodicals to which he from time to time contributed may be mentioned, the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, the *Scots Magazine*, the *Social Pioneer*, the *Art Journal*, *Magazine of Art*, the *Bailie*, the *Bookman*, *Good Words*, etc. To the *Social Pioneer* he contributed a set of papers on the Tudor Exhibition of 1890; and for another magazine which has also gone the same way as the last mentioned, the *Children's Guide*, he wrote a charming series of papers on the 'Children of the Painters.' They are full of art criticism, but criticism of a sort which would make it

intelligible to juvenile readers; it is beautifully simple, but never infantile, and it will not be surprising if an art critic of some future day acknowledges that he owes his first introduction to the subject to its lucid exposition by the author of these papers.[1]

While working at the description of the Art Treasures in Penicuik House, Gray had been shown a curious family relic in the shape of an autobiography of Sir John Clerk, one of the Barons of Exchequer. In 1892 he edited this for the Scottish History Society, and the volume proved one of the most popular of all their valuable publications. From the number of allusions to different persons which occur throughout the biography, it was no light task to undertake to identify each individual referred to, but with indefatigable industry the editor set himself to the work. There is hardly a name which he did not run to earth, and about which he did not embody some information in a footnote. There are several hundred notes, biographical, historical, and topographical, and they, together with an admirably compiled preface, form as thorough and complete a setting to the text as could

[1] See vol. ii. p. 117.

possibly be desired. He had, no doubt, the assistance of Mr. T. G. Law and Sheriff Scott Moncrieff, but by far the greater proportion of the work was his, and must have cost him many an hour of tedious investigation; the result, however, was as complete a picture of life in the first half of the eighteenth century as has ever been given to the public. Hardly had he completed this when he commenced researches with the view of writing a monograph on James and William Tassie, with a catalogue of their portrait medallions. The Tassie medallions are so widely scattered over the country, though a large collection of them is in the possession of the Board of Manufactures, Edinburgh, that their collection, collation, and identification involved a great deal of arduous work and heavy correspondence. The task, however, was done with his usual thoroughness, and the sketch and catalogue appeared early in 1894. This work brought him some reputation not merely in this country, but on the Continent, and in the December following its publication and his own death a very laudatory notice of it appeared in the Parisian journal *L'Art*, from the pen of M. Paul Leroi, in which he expresses

a wish that the volume should be translated into French, its artistic and historical interest being so great. The last paper which he wrote for the *Magazine of Art* was one upon the Foulis Academy and James Tassie, which appeared in that Journal very shortly before the death of the author. The very last literary work which he did was to write a Preface to the Catalogue of the paintings by his friend Mr. J. Lawton Wingate, R.S.A., which were exhibited in Edinburgh in the spring of last year. It is a most delicate and subtle piece of art criticism, and in it there is no trace of failing power, no hint of the shadow that was then so close behind him, and which was so soon to still that busy and fertile brain for ever.

In the hasty summary of John Gray's work which I have attempted in the foregoing pages, I have not alluded to one thing about which, if he could be said to be proud about anything, he was justly proud. It had much personal interest for me—the writer of these lines—as, though I had known Gray for many years previously, it brought me into closer contact with him than I had ever been before, and forms one of the sweetest reminiscences of my

intercourse with him. This was the Heraldic Exhibition held at Edinburgh in 1891, and of which Gray was the originator and enthusiastic organiser. I may perhaps be permitted to devote a page or two to the story of the inception and carrying out of the idea.

When I was appointed Lyon King of Arms in 1890, among the many kind congratulations sent me by friends, not the least warm were those from John Gray. I wish I could quote from two charming letters I received from him at this time, they are so characteristic and so kind. One thing, however, I soon found out, that he was a devoted student of Heraldry, though, as he himself said, he looked at it more as an art than as a science—that he was more interested in its decorative potentialities than in its genealogical meaning. This may have been so, but Gray's genealogical knowledge might have fitted out many a man with more pretensions to have studied that subject. As for Heraldry, he was quite enamoured of it; he set himself to get together a good heraldic library, and spared neither pains nor money for this object. Many were the rare and valuable books which he picked up, and at the time of his death he had an important

collection on the subject, all of which, with characteristic thoughtfulness, he bequeathed to the library of the Lyon Office. As an example of his determination to secure everything that was good, it may be mentioned that he was one of the very few men in Great Britain—possibly the only one—who possessed a copy of M. Victor Bouton's large hand-painted edition of the *Armorial de Gelre*, and of the almost equally large and uncommon reproduction of the *Gröningen Armorial*. The acquisition of books like these afforded him intense pleasure, and he appreciated to the full their masterly freedom of style and glorious combinations of colour. He had a true conception of the right spirit of heraldic art, and the emblazonings of the arms in the Lyon Register to-day owe not a little to his assistance and kindly advice. Conspicuous also among the decorations of his own tastefully arranged rooms were a series of coats of arms taken from examples in the Armorial de Gelre, cut out of sheet lead and coloured in their proper tinctures, while in his windows were hung quaint reproductions in coloured glass of old heraldic achievements.

Such being his tastes in this direction, I

welcomed with pleasure a proposal which he made, that a Heraldic Exhibition should be got up in view of the meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute at Edinburgh in the summer of 1891. Circumstances were not indeed favourable to the holding of any exhibition just at that time, but the attempt was made, and, thanks to Gray's indomitable energy and perseverance, it proved a complete success. A guarantee fund was got up, not of any large amount, but which, owing to the personal labour bestowed on the preliminary work, and the careful economy exercised in the expenditure, proved more than sufficient for the object in view. Gray did not spare himself in the carrying out of his favourite project: I fear indeed he somewhat overtaxed his strength in his devotion to the work, and his steadfast resolution to delegate nothing to paid labour which could be carried out otherwise. I shall not soon forget these long spring and summer days of 1891, when he toiled at the thousand and one details incidental to the getting up of the Exhibition. He felt, however, that he was amply compensated for his efforts by the result. For three months the Exhibition was open to

the public free of charge, and the many wonderfully interesting and artistic objects there shown were quite a revelation to the thousands of people who availed themselves of the opportunity to see them. His labours did not end with the mere collection of the exhibits and the return of them to their respective owners: he chose with great discrimination those objects which he thought should be put on permanent record, and superintended along with his friends, Mr. W. R. Macdonald and Mr. A. W. Inglis, the production of an Illustrated Catalogue, which is now one of the most valuable items in a heraldic collector's library. He wrote also in the *Scotsman* the greater number of a series of articles descriptive of the Exhibition.

I have endeavoured in the foregoing pages to give a general indication of the variety and extent of John Gray's work. Had his life been prolonged, there can be little doubt that he would have made a still greater mark in that line of literary work on which he had entered. Of his critical powers I shall leave others, more qualified than I am, to speak; but it is clear to the most casual reader of what he wrote that he not only possessed the pen

of a ready writer, but that he had the faculty of expressing himself in language which was at once rhythmic and graceful, and the capacity to choose the right word and to use it in the right place. He had an inborn love for art and poetry and all that was beautiful, a love which he fostered with sedulous care, and made it not only a source of pleasure to himself, but of use to others. The powers which he had thus cultivated had reached, at his death, a height which gave him a recognised position as an authority on his special subjects. The study and diligence of his more youthful years were bringing forth fruit; and it is no breach of confidence to say that within the last few days of his life an offer was about to be made him of a post which would not only have been very advantageous to him from a pecuniary point of view, but would have afforded him a more extended sphere for the exercise of his special abilities than that in which he then was.

This, however, was not to be: the end came unexpectedly. After one week of suffering, which, though severe, did not till latterly excite the alarm of his friends, the

end came with startling suddenness. Though tended through his illness by careful hands, he was, at the moment when the call of the Master came, absolutely alone; but we may be certain that no spirit ever left its frail tenement of clay with greater certainty of being greeted with the 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

He died on the 22nd of March 1894, and five days afterwards he was laid to rest by a company of mourners, among whom were included some of the most distinguished leaders of thought and culture in Scotland. His loss, indeed, was felt to be a personal one by all with whom he had come in contact during his life; and many were the expressions of the esteem in which he had been held, and of the affection which his gentle nature and sweetness of disposition had evoked. Of these I may be permitted to quote that of Sir George Scharf, the Director and Keeper of the National Portrait Gallery in London, which he contributed to the *Athenæum* of June 16, 1894:—

'Whilst mourning the loss of my most highly valued friend, John Miller Gray, of Edinburgh, a fellow-worker in the field of portraiture and

historical research, and a most genial companion, who died suddenly in March last, I read with considerable emotion a letter from him in the *Athenæum* of April 14th, which seemed to me as a voice from another world. It was really written during his last illness, and a reference to me in that letter showed that my name was on his dying lips.

'I now wish, before it is too late, in common with a host of other friends, who have already borne testimony to his high worth and generous unselfish nature, to record my full sense of his rare qualifications for the duties to which circumstances had fortunately led him, as Curator of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Gray was devoted to history. He had a strong natural perception of form (an essential qualification for the identification of likeness), a quick memory, with indomitable energy and sagacity in penetrating to the origin and groundwork of whatever came before him. He was well able to sift evidence. His industry and extensive reading were shown in the varied and numerous reviews which he contributed to the leading periodicals both of London and Edinburgh, many containing monographs on portrait collections in ancestral

houses; and his essays on Burns and the Tassies will be constantly referred to.

'He completed an excellent Catalogue of the Loan Collection of Portraits at Edinburgh in 1885. One of his most useful and characteristic productions was his history of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, opened in state at Edinburgh, July 15, 1889, which was printed in 1891, with illustrations. He there gave a clear account of the origin of the Gallery and its progress, fostered by the munificence of an anonymous benefactor, whose honoured name, John R. Findlay, was first revealed on the occasion of the state inauguration. My high appreciation of Mr. J. M. Gray's qualifications had long determined me to endeavour to obtain his co-operation in carrying out the arduous task which still remains before me of arranging the portraits on the walls of the new building, now nearing completion, in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross. Mr. Gray had already become acquainted with my wishes, and I had every reason to hope that arrangements might have been made for realisation of the scheme.

'Gray was of a responsive disposition, and always ready to impart information to others from his abundant stores of knowledge. I feel

his loss as that of a younger brother who would most ably have assisted in carrying out the projects I had in view.

'GEORGE SCHARF.'

No better testimony than the above could be given, not only to the esteem, but the affection which Gray inspired in those who were best qualified to judge of his abilities in the line which he had specially marked out for himself. His friend, Mr. Frederick Wedmore, penned a graceful tribute to his memory in the columns of the *Academy*. The estimate of his character by an equally dear friend and a distinguished writer, Mr. Skelton, may fittingly close this brief record of Gray's life-work :—

'I had a true regard for Gray. During the last years of his life he was often with us both at the Hermitage and in the Highlands. He was a most pleasant inmate, easy, unassuming, unexacting. He had very considerable ability, and his industry was unremitting. He had indeed no aptitude for mercantile business; and as a Bank clerk he must have suffered prolonged martyrdom. But he escaped from the slavery in course of time, and by great good luck found the work which suited him. By great

good luck; for his tastes were rather uncommon. He was keenly interested in literature; but the books that he most relished, the men he most admired, could hardly be called popular. While the readers of the latest sensational and not particularly edifying romance of society are numbered by thousands, the readers of Pater and Rossetti, and even of Browning, are numbered by tens. But it was the precision, the exactitude, of his information on all the subjects, literary or artistic, which came home to him that impressed one most. His area might be somewhat limited; but within that area he had few rivals. He went direct to the fountain-head; he took nothing on hearsay, or at second-hand; he was a born investigator. The spirit, moreover, in which he worked was admirable. It was the spirit of *the pure student.* The material interests in which we worldlings are more or less immersed had no attraction for Gray. He was never mercenary, never scheming, never sordid. So long as his simple wants were met, he desired nothing more, except what might aid him in the pursuit of his craft. I sometimes compared him in my mind to the mediæval monk who spent his life in illuminating a missal. Other

men might spend their lives in money-making; others in politics or sport; others with wives and families about them. But this by no means ascetic monk lived a solitary life; his books were his family; to the line of research which he had deliberately selected he devoted himself heart and soul. And to the end he was true to his vocation. Because he was constitutionally and wisely frugal—"magnum vectigal est parsimonia"—he was able on a very slender income to gratify his finer tastes, and to devote himself exclusively and with an enthusiasm which never flagged to the discharge of duties which, pecuniarily at least, brought no very adequate recompense. He died a comparatively young man, with his work unfinished; but his was a frail body—deficient in the coarser fibre which lasts—and his death can hardly be said to have taken those who knew him well by surprise.'

RECOLLECTIONS

By MICHAEL FIELD

RECOLLECTIONS

WE first met John Gray for a brief hour when he visited Clifton in the spring of 1886; but it was not until the autumn of the same year, when we went north, that our friendship with him really began.

We had only the slightest knowledge of Edinburgh; with an exquisite chivalry he did the honours of a host for his city, and brought out, by a kind of welcoming tact, all the loveliness of its site, and the vitality of its past. He was never a guide, from the moment of our first walk down the High Street to the moment when we explored our last Wynd: never wearisome nor over emphatic, he directed the spirit of what we saw to our sympathy. Since then among Scottish people we have often found a gift for drawing out of a place delightful entertainment for strangers; but John Gray added to this gift the justness of a trained eye, the charm of a delicately enjoying temperament.

Our friendship with him was formed as we wandered about Edinburgh, and was carried further by several visits to his rooms at 25 York Place, where *The Germ* was put in our hands, *The Defence of Guinevere* praised with zeal, Browning read aloud, and all questions that had to do with the literature of the middle of the century, and the art springing from Pre-raphaelitism discussed merrily, and always with a bias on his part toward appreciation. He was pre-eminently an enjoyer, who persuaded his friends to share his glee by the infection of his own excitement. He gave them a relish for his choice, whether it were theirs or not. 'I should like you to enjoy the same joy as myself,' he once confessed. Although too finely strung to be secure against sadness, and much too frail in health not to be physically despondent, when he was speaking of books, of pictures and portraits he was jocund; his eyes would dance, a boyish chuckle would often be the spontaneous expression of his triumph at having bought a treasure, or of his mere abounding admiration for a good verse in a poem, for character or quaintness in a design.

His room was like encountering his person-

ality in an outer court; it was so much himself—full of his own qualities, his sense of order, his daintiness, his love of sun-faded colour, of poetry, of research, and of the graphic arts. From his table-desk he could see or handle objects singularly interpretive of his affections and tastes; no one could sit down among them without recognising that he was in the home of a man who delighted to look long at the portraits of his friends, to take up and hold communion with his favourite authors, and to watch the visitings of the light on objects he loved.

To realise, to get into sympathy with such a life, we cannot do better than turn to certain quiet pictures of St. Jerome, with his lion, his Vulgate and its appurtenances on the rock, and, in the distance, a crucifix. John Gray, it is true, was a town solitary, while St. Jerome belonged to the desert and open air; their resemblance lies in their devoutness, their passion, and their reticence. If they prayed, their prayer was to one in secret; if they wrote, they wrote to give glory to names not their own. We cannot extract a creed from such men; we divine what is precious to them and step aside from it with instinctive rever-

ence. John Gray never discussed religion nor poetry in the abstract: he was too full of faith and enjoying energy to lay bare the origin of his spiritual or æsthetic emotions.

When at last we left Edinburgh, we left a friend behind us, to whom we wrote, and from whom we heard with more or less frequency. His letters, like his room, had a very intimate resemblance to himself—orderly handwriting, very small and very legible; a crisp, business-like statement of the subject about which he was writing, that yet in a few happy words here and there vibrated with interest or became sportive, or confiding, or affectionate.

In the spring of the next year (1887) he was studying Browning's *Parleyings*, and wrote: 'As yet I have not been able to read it very often, not above seventeen times or so, shall we say? When I have gone over it even till the seventieth-times-seven, I may then feel I have got it *all*.'

This little extract is typical of the perseverance with which he read the authors he loved. That long, steady attention the eye has to learn before it can become an organ of art criticism, was used by him also in appreciating literature. He read and re-read and read again—'for the

very often *again*,' as he put it—the printed words, the symbols of the writer's mind, just as he looked into the forms and colour of an artist's work in a gallery, with the same patient exhaustiveness, and, stranger still, with the same vivacity. There are few, very few readers who have this method; the printed page rarely commands fidelity and receptive devotion such as he gave it. And he was no commentator; he did not compare, analyse; he only looked into a book as into a picture, that his enjoyment might be clear and apprehending.

We have dwelt on his power of joy and on the attention he gave to books, because without doubt our friendship with him deepened largely through his possessing these two qualities. If we are to speak of him as we really know him, it is impossible to avoid speaking of ourselves.

He enjoyed our best work almost as we enjoyed it in the making; nevertheless, if what we had written gave him no pleasure, he owned it without hesitation. 'See how frankly and severely I speak, as though the piece were written by myself. Could friendship do more?' Yet always he made the effort to enjoy,

believing that the critic should strive to be in harmony with the aim of the artist, which is from the first to embody pleasure.

Through the eight years of our friendship he welcomed warmly and read our volumes completely. When we met him he had already reviewed a play of ours, *Brutus Ultor*, without a suspicion of its authorship, in a review that, as usual with his criticism, was chiefly a record of the elements of pleasure he had found in the book. During our visit to Edinburgh he discovered the real authorship; and from that time received copies of all we published, and reviewed each work either privately in a letter or in one of the journals. His spirited interest was very delightful. His good wishes (as he himself said) 'were as prayers.'

There is no question that, in purely *literary* criticism, though often fervid, he was also restricted; and though most authors brought to him a special kind of pleasure, he rarely, if ever, considered them in their relation to their age or to other ages. His own acute, subjective enjoyment was what gave life to his reviews; his sympathies were more liberal than his culture, more profound than his powers of thought.

In the autumn of 1887 we were again in Edinburgh, on the track of Queen Mary; and now, for the first time in our friendship, we came to understand John Gray's minute knowledge of Scottish portraiture, to discover his power of tracing essential qualities of likeness under divergences of treatment that simply bewildered us. We found he could make his special study alive for others, just as before he had made his knowledge of his city inspiring. And he spared no pains to help; yet what he could do was always done so unobtrusively that it did not seem like help—it came to one as if from his very nature, with the ease of an instinct.

On this visit, too, he joined us in several expeditions to castles and towns connected with Queen Mary's life. Out in the country we found him an exhilarating companion. That delicious prick frost gives to one's energies when one starts on a walk was very like the effect of John Gray's light-heartedness; his playful expectation of adventure, the way he rubbed his hands and looked at everything as if it were a treat, his impetuous movements, provoking emulation—all these things gave point to a walk in his society.

On one occasion he even insisted on enjoying a rainy day at Borthwick Castle. 'I like it,' he said, when we objected that it was chilly and miserable; 'Oh, I like it;' and all through the sopping wet he greeted the beauty of berry, of autumn leaf, of streamlet, or of the least gleam across the clouds.

A letter received from him early next year speaks, for the first time in our correspondence, of a visit to Robert Browning. His attachment to the 'brave and splendid grey-beard singer' had from the first been a bond of friendship between us, and some of the pleasantest moments we had together were those when he read Browning's lyrics with a passionate restraint in his voice that accorded well with the tension of the verse. He speaks of this visit as most pleasant:—'They' (*i.e.* Mr. Browning and his sister) 'received me quite like an old friend; "with open arms" is hardly a figure of speech.'

By the middle of June (1888) he was settled in his new rooms at 28 Gayfield Square. It was very much to him to find that they looked to the south-west on a public garden, 'with an exquisitely kept space of grass, and with many willows and a *red hawthorn bush*,

large, old, red you may call it, or at least ruddy-pink, say at least, the colour running up among its witheredness like a blush over a wrinkled, weather-browned face.'

This impression distantly recalls the red hawthorn passage in Pater's "Child in the House"; and undoubtedly the two men whom we could see most continuously at work in their influence on John Gray's life, were Robert Browning and Walter Pater; one appealed to his fervour, his manliness, his religious faith; the other cultivated his deep but rather narrow sense of beauty, and increased its responsiveness in many directions.

The year 1889 was to show us that our friend could trust death without fear. We had, during the summer, to wrestle with sorrow and loss in our own home; and his sympathy made him write of intimate, spiritual hopes he had never before acknowledged so freely: 'Yes, it is a grand and solemn thing to have struggled out of the cramping, torturing shell of mundane conditions and got into reality. What a process it is! but when it is finally over and done with, surely then

> "Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast—nothing but well and fair,
> And what may quiet us!"

'Some of us, I know, would gladly have got over with it all too, with death become a mere educative experience of the past (like some of the terrible things of the past that we look back upon *now*, with a grave smile, as we remember them), and with around us in the present nothing but sweet, fit, fostering conditions, for the development of our right humanity. "Give us the glory of going on," must be our deepest prayer to the Power who has "loved us into being," who has made us, with no will of ours, and pressed us on irresistibly into existence; and in the future may we never go back, never become less ourselves than we are now, but more and more ourselves, developing our own individuality and particular genius, as parts of a great whole, members moved by one spirit.'

The year ended with the death of Robert Browning; and again John Gray's faith, which was so much of the same muscle as the dead poet's, proved its strength.

'As for the Abbey and its burying,' he writes, 'I don't care a single straw one way or the other. Let the dead bury *their* dead just exactly as they please; for my own part, with the lifted wings of my most strenuous aspir-

ations, I shall follow the risen man into the celestial spaces.'

More than a year before he had written concerning Matthew Arnold's death: 'But don't finish your love for Matthew by loving him "in nature" only. That love won't carry far. Whatever in him nature had sway over isn't very human or very lovable by this time—it's getting made into daisies and buttercups with much celerity, and you won't find it ennobling to culminate by loving *them* because they are all that is left of Matthew. No, I came on a thing in the writings of an old astrologer just to-night, which hits the thing straighter. He is speaking of the misfortune that attended the mother of our Queen, Henrietta Maria, and came even on all countries that she visited; and he goes on, "True it is, and I do very well know, that some people born under an unfortunate constellation of heaven (without this, *that they live above nature and live wholly in the spirit*), are so extremely unsuccessful in everything they undertake," etc. etc. No, nature is just a flattering Jael that brings you "milk and butter in a lordly dish;" and when she has got you thoroughly pleased and placid, hammers a ten-

penny nail through your temples, through every bit of you she can possibly get at. No, I have no *ultimate* trust in nature at all.'

In the autumn of this sad year we had been as usual to Edinburgh, and found John Gray established in his Portrait Gallery, to which he had been giving all his energies for months. And the pleasantly-lighted room bore unemphatic but unmistakable witness to the devotion, knowledge, good taste, and patience of its curator. He put into the public Gallery something of that same self-expressiveness he put into his own rooms; it was strange that so quiet a personality should have such a power of adhering to all that it dealt with, but the power was certainly there, and was due in great measure to the independence, the reality of his tastes, a truth to himself in all he purchased, handled, or expressed. In 1890 we missed his spring visit to town, and in the autumn we did not visit Scotland. Most of this year he was absorbed in arranging the Heraldic Exhibition; and, as he asks in a letter, 'What have poets to do with Heraldry?' We on our part were absorbed in the study of Italian Art, for which he never showed more than a

rather distant love. Therefore 1890 was a year in which our friendship was stationary; that gave us none of these mutual discoveries that feed our pleasure in each other.

But when, next year, we were imprisoned in a German Fever Hospital, we found that John Gray could be as brave a helper in illness as in bereavement. 'To the poet there are more moving and intimate teachers than even these,' he wrote, referring to our disappointment in being banished from the Dresden Gallery and Opera House, 'if we will but let the Power that rules our human life work his perfect will with us. Let us build altars to the beautiful necessity, that is apt to look so terrible of aspect. Let us let all the waves and billows go over us, and emerge all the stronger, also all the braver, for the shock, convinced that whatever Life says to us, it at any rate speaks no word of fear.' John Gray could always write the serious words that the situation needed; and then he would vary his fellow-feeling by a kind of discreet banter, only safe when tenderly directed, but always safe from him. In the matter of service, whatever he could do was done unobtrusively, and if possible, continuously. For instance,

the whole of the time we were in the Krankenhaus books and papers reached us from Edinburgh, witnessing his patient thought for us week by week. He had a happy touch for that most delicate of problems—how to deal with the unhappiness of others; never drawing too near to one's sorrow to be overshadowed by its cloud. During the spring that followed this autumn of enforced imprisonment we resumed our happy Art Studies —visiting together the Exhibitions, as we had done for five years. In a Gallery he was inclined to be genial in heart toward the pictures, but his eye was severe and his comments of praise or blame very brief. He was generally too much absorbed in the actual work of looking to be at all inclined to say much, except when a canvas struck him with such swift joy that he grew ejaculatory.

This same May—a May of sunshiny blueness—we had a freshening week together, when he came to stay near us in our Surrey home. We visited Penshurst and Richmond, and we walked over our own downs, always finding him attuned to the beauty before him, and so full of lines and phrases, sometimes whole verses from the books he had read

again and again that it almost seemed as if his consciousness had been woven for him by many poets.

In the autumn he joined us at Grantown-on-Spey, in a sparkling holiday mood, ready for long walks, for discussion, for the 'smooth jellies and creams' he enjoyed so daintily for supper, yet all the while with a frail appearance that removed his mirth far from any animal boisterousness.

We parted full of the hope of meeting again, but from that day we never saw each other—although, in the early Spring of 1894, we had almost agreed to meet in Paris, during the May that our friend did not live to welcome. We had just visited Stonehenge for the first time, late in the March of that year, when we heard quite suddenly of John Gray's death. It was impossible to realise that we should not see him again—those bright eyes that seized everything as their own; the face so delicately modelled and responsive, yet quietly marked by a character at once definite and reticent—a face, not so much handsome as plastic, with bits of sensitive shadow and touches of almost transparent light.

Then we recalled the words he himself wrote when Robert Browning died :—

'No, I feel nearer to him now than when I knew him living at Kensington or Venice. *Even now* it is possible to see him "clearer than mortal sense perceived the man." Friends, let us love each other well, since we cannot love the flesh-vestured selves of each other long. You remember the painter Constable's last letter asking friends to visit him, "I pray you come, life is short, friendship is sweet"—and he was gone the next morning. Yours always, J. M. GRAY.'

STONEHENGE

That sudden, awful temple of the plain
Left but an hour ago, we learnt that he
Th' elected guardian of our memory
And friend of our spring years was dead; the brain
Grew torpid with a sense of coming pain:
Our past was gone from us, and whither—we,
What was our goal? We turned instinctively,
Back to those solemn temple-stones again.
For all that faith can do is simply done
Around that grassy height: the dead are there,
The unrecorded dead about the slope—
Men raised that cromlech for the western sun
To wander over, in a great despair
Of knowledge, greeting an eternal hope.

March 1894.

ART CRITICISM

By W. D. MACKAY, R.S.A.

ART CRITICISM

IT is nigh twenty years since I became acquainted with John Gray. In those days, the middle seventies, the custom of giving a preliminary notice of what our Annual Exhibition was likely to be, had not yet been given up, and representatives of the various journals visited the studios a week or two before receiving day, to note what was forthcoming.

Amongst others, one of delicate and sensitive cast of countenance, and most juvenile appearance, introduced himself as Mr. Gray, Art Critic for the *Courant*. He said little, but quietly took his notes, and for some years our acquaintance was confined to this annual visit, and an occasional nod of recognition on the street.

About the year 1878 Mr. P. W. Adam and I had resolved to publish, as a memorial of our friend George Manson, a volume containing photographic reproductions of his work in water-colour and pencil, together with a

memoir of his brief but interesting career. It was no light task, for photographic reproduction was far from having attained its present perfection, and in Scotland at least little had been done in that way. But what troubled us most was the question of the Memoir. Neither of us felt capable of such a literary effort. Who was to write it?

One indeed we knew who had all the necessary qualifications, personal acquaintance with Manson, keen artistic sympathy, and a power of literary expression almost unrivalled for such a work, Dr. John Brown; and though we hardly dared to hope, to the good doctor we went.

We were most kindly received, but it was as we had feared; Dr. Brown felt that his literary work was over. He showed the greatest sympathy with our purpose; and when we told him of our plight, said, somewhat abruptly, as his manner was, 'You should ask John Gray.'

We were still hesitating, for neither of us knew much of Gray's literary powers, when we had a letter from him, inspired perhaps by Dr. Brown, asking to be allowed to undertake the work as a labour of love,

and expressing the great delight Manson's art had been to him. Something in the tone of the letter gave us confidence, and it was agreed that he should write the Memoir—an arrangement which assuredly we had no cause to regret.

From this time dates our more intimate acquaintance, which was fostered by his subsequent publications, 'David Scott,' and the critical estimate of the art of P. W. Nicholson appended to Mr. Baildon's memoir.

In the spring of 1887 we spent nearly two months together in Italy, visiting the various shrines of the artist's Mecca. Such an experience, as may well be imagined, drew us closer together, and led to various projects for the future, so that our reminiscences of Italy were mingled with dreams of Spain, the Low Countries, and the famous Hermitage at St. Petersburg. Such dreams, alas! are difficult of realisation; and though one of them almost had its fulfilment in 1890, dreams they remained till the end came, so suddenly and unexpectedly.

On the strength of this intimate acquaintance with John Gray and his art work during the past fifteen years, I have been asked to

furnish some notes on him in his capacity of art critic.

Twenty-five years ago Art Criticism was in rather a chaotic state, from which it is only slowly emerging. A story is current that a famous editor of those days, on being asked how he allowed such notices of our Exhibitions to appear in his paper, replied that he would never think of setting any one who could do anything else to write about *picters*. If not literally true, this explanation contained a germ of truth, for no special faculty seemed necessary; and having acquired a few technical terms, the critic was free to join himself to the innocent or the slashing school, as he might think fit. We had specimens of both on our Scottish press, and their articles were read, and doubtless believed in, by a public not very discerning in such matters.

The procedure of the innocent school, which happily predominated, was to give a description, more or less elaborate, of the subject of the work under review, set off with a few technical phrases, whilst the slasher's only object was—well—to slash, which he did with the perfect confidence born of ignorance.

Nor ought artists to be so severe as they

often are on this state of affairs; for Art Criticism is itself a difficult art, implying keen sympathy, long training, and almost, one would say, some measure of latent capacity for art production, combined with a faculty for translating into words sensations which seem at first to defy such form of expression.

Let the artist who doubts this station himself before one of the world's masterpieces, Velasquez's 'Surrender of Breda,' or Rembrandt's 'Syndics,' and try to give a rational and readable account of what in them excites his admiration and enthusiasm. Or let him try to make clear to a supposed average reader (for that is the critic's task) what differentiates the styles of the two masters, or distinguishes either from the work of a third. Then perhaps he may learn to sympathise with those who have to do so, minus his own initial advantage of practical acquaintance with the painter's art, and to be thankful that of late years a school of criticism has been growing up, based on some adequate conception of our art, patiently and laboriously acquired.

Of this School, Gray was an able representative.

I think I have heard that in his boyhood he came under the influence of Ruskin; and, like so many others, followed for a while the course of instruction recommended in 'The Elements of Drawing.' However this may be, he seems early to have realised that his connection with art was not to be in the productive direction. But it is interesting as evidence that he possessed in some measure that latent faculty referred to above, as being, if not a necessity, at least a great advantage to the capable critic.

Another qualification, this time surely a first necessity, Gray had attained to in his later years—catholicity of view. I have said, in his later years, because there was a time when it seemed that he was being drawn somewhat too strongly in one direction. Was it his early enthusiasm for Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, his literary proclivities, a slightly morbid strain in his own temperament, or a combination of all three that led to his excessive admiration for the painters of the Æsthetic School, into which the earlier Pre-Raphaelitism merged some twenty or twenty-five years ago? From whatever cause, it is undoubted that the works of this school

and of their prototypes of the middle ages occupied for some years rather more than a fair share of his attention.

It is said that when some ardent disciples of the Pre-Raphaelite School visited Antwerp in the early days of the movement, they passed the works of Rubens with averted eyes. John Gray would never have done anything so foolish; but there was something of the same spirit in the way he would turn from some accomplished work of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries with the monosyllable 'late.' This I had frequent occasion to note during our Italian tour.

Naturally the productions of painters who dealt largely in symbolism had a strong attraction for his literary side; for this school of artists has produced its own school of authors, and reams have been written on Blake and Rossetti by men who would not have a word to say concerning such masters of their craft as Terburgh or Jan Steen.

To this class of writers, men of great literary culture most of them, technique, *mere* technique, as it is sometimes called, is a trivial affair; so inveterate is the tendency to ignore the very root of the matter, that 'exterior envelope,' as

a great writer has said, 'without which the works of the imagination neither are nor live.' For in spite of their culture, these gentlemen belong essentially to the class of critics already alluded to, who take refuge in describing the subject; they expound the symbolism and see mystic meanings in pouting lips, unhealthy complexions, and lack-lustre eyes.

Happily, Gray's nature was too healthy to permit him to confine his admiration to the works of any one school, and the danger of his becoming a mere devotee of Æstheticism was of short duration. For always, alongside of the slightly morbid strain referred to, there was the healthy love of all that was beautiful in his surroundings. Nature, animate and inanimate, had infinite charms for him. He was no sickly recluse, but went much into society, and this busy nineteenth century life of ours, 'late' though it was, kept him in touch with the times he lived in, and with the movements of contemporary art.

Nothing could well have been more successful than his *Memoir of George Manson*, of which we have spoken at the commencement of these notes, or more sympathetic and discriminating than the annexed estimate of his art. To me

it has always remained a marvel that one who had no personal acquaintance with the artist should have been able to produce so delightful a record. It is scarcely too much to say that in doing so he has saved a reputation. If here and there, in this, and in his subsequent works on David Scott and P. W. Nicholson, one feels 'the pale cast of thought,' that was almost inevitable, from the nature of the subjects he had to deal with. In Gray's later writings there is, I think, abundant evidence that his sympathies were going more and more with the stronger and healthier developments of modern art. The articles on our Annual Exhibitions, contributed latterly to the *Scottish Leader*, were gaining in strength year by year; whilst his latest utterance, the notice of J. Lawton Wingate, prefixed to the catalogue of the artist's works exhibited at Mr. Dott's rooms last spring, seems to me his best. For here we have not only a lucid expression of keenest sympathy with, and delight in the various aspects and moods of nature recorded by the artist, but evidence that the critic was more and more fully realising how indissolubly the painter's art is bound up in its technique. This is of great importance,

and we wish to emphasise it; for just as a masterly command of his medium of expression is the infallible mark of the true artist, so the capacity to discern and feel this is the crucial distinction betwixt the genuine art critic and the mere writer about pictures. Eugène Fromentin has realised the value of technique when in his *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* he expresses his opinion that the handicraft of the 'little masters' of Holland places their work on a far securer art basis than such pictures as Millet's 'Angelus' or 'Sower,' which an elevated sentiment has made familiar in two hemispheres.

We do not claim for Gray anything like the position of the great Frenchman, but it is something to be able to say that he was advancing on right lines. In the article we have referred to, though he modestly says that in speaking of Mr. Wingate's work he feels the inadequacy of literary expression, the immediately following paragraphs do very clearly set forth how largely the spectator's delight is dependent on 'expressive draughtsmanship,' 'spirit and accuracy of touch,' and 'combinations of tone and colour.' Such appreciation of the

accent of the brush as we have here, is to the artist a sure indication that his critic is no longer writing in the dark; but that he has attained to that freedom of the craft which carries with it the right to criticise.

Here, surely, we are far enough from the journalistic articles of quarter of a century ago; and I believe that all who watched Gray's steady advance in knowledge and art wisdom, will agree with me that, in the not distant future, he would have taken a high place amongst the art writers of his time.

Those only who knew him best can feel the full extent of the loss that has fallen on us; but amongst his many artist friends his early death is mourned, not on personal grounds only, but as the removal of an influence for good in the development of Scottish Art.

PAPERS AND CRITICISMS

Ye Booke Shoppe
LRA.
John M: Gray Passeth a Book Shop 1881

AN HOUR IN AN OLD LIBRARY

From *The People's Friend*, 7th October, 1874

THE library which we are about to visit is contained in an old sea-coast castle in the north of England. The castle, along with much of the neighbourhood, belonged to a certain high dignitary of the Church, and was by him bequeathed to a charity which bears his name. There are schools for the village children held in it now; and, instead of swarming with armed men, it is filled with quaintly-dressed boys and girls, and echoes to the sound of their youthful merriment. We wonder if the mouldering walls have a consciousness, and, if so, whether they enjoy the change from their old warfaring days, or if on winter nights, when the fierce winds howl around, and the wild waves dash beneath, they live their old times over again, and think of sieges and assaults.

To reach the castle we have a walk of about a mile, partly by the sea beach, and partly by

a footpath winding through among 'sand bunkers.' It is a lovely day. The sky is of deepest summer blue, flecked with white clouds. Directly in front are the turreted walls, situated on a commanding rock, with the village and her church nestling at its base. To the left are corn-clad fields, and on the right the sea, stretching away in dreamy haze. In the extreme distance a faint line indicates the position of an island celebrated in British history as an ancient seat of learning and piety. We soon reach the castle, and, ascending a corkscrew stair, we enter the library.

A certain awe comes over us as we cross the threshold. We should as soon think of standing with covered head in the beautiful village church beneath as of doing so here. For the place is in some sort holy ground, haunted and consecrated by the spirits of those great dead ones, whose life-work surrounds the walls. Thoughts come over us of other libraries with which we are familiar—of the Bodleian, with its venerable antiquity, its heavy oaken ceiling, and its reading nooks, dear to the heart of the bookworm; and of the Union Reading-room at Oxford, with its modern literature and modern comforts. And we remember pleasant

morning hours spent in this latter, in the easiest of reading-chairs, the fresh spring breeze bearing gently to our ear through the open windows the melody of college bells and bird's song, and the sound of the whetting scythe.

The library in which we now find ourselves contains a good collection of the classics in fine old editions; but we do not feel much inclined to dip deeply into this department. There are also an immense number of pamphlets and treatises of religious controversies—refutations of heresies which have long since become extinct, or which now flourish under new names. The eyes of theologians may have kindled over them in bygone days, but all interest has gone from them, and there they lie covered with dust—their leaves seldom opened.

But the library is specially rich in our older literature, and this to us is its most interesting department. If we will, Chaucer is ready to give us a spring walk among England's dewy meadows; or, the golden-mouthed Taylor will throw around us the rich autumnal glow of his eloquence. Spenser will guide us through dim enchanted forests, or Shakespeare will tell us of all things upon which the sun looks down.

Herbert will delight us with his pregnant quaintness, and the tender fancy of Crashaw will gleam fitfully upon us. Milton will picture for us in his poetry the wars of heaven, or will stir us as to battle with the trumpet-notes of his prose. All those mighty spirits will play upon us if we only open ourselves to their influence, and make our souls responsive to their touch,

> 'As an harpe obeieth to the honde
> That maketh it soune after his fyngerynge.'

Here is an early copy of that once famous book, Lyly's *Euphues*. It opens of its own accord, and between the pages we find a dry rose, from which all colour and perfume has long since faded. It marks the following passage :—

'Heere shalt thou behold, as it were in a glasse, that al the glory of man is as the grasse, that all things under heaven are but vaine; that our lyfe is but a shadow, a warfare, a pilgrimage, a vapor, a bubble, a blast; of such shortnesse that David saith it is but a span long; of such sharpnes that Job noteth it replenished with al miseries, of such uncerteinetie, that we are no sooner borne but we are subject to death, the one foote no sooner

on the ground but the other ready to slip into the grave.'

The flower may have grown in the parterre of some stately Elizabethan garden. It may have drunk the sunshine which gilded the days of the good Queen Bess, and the winds which scattered the Armada may have rocked it upon its stem. Perhaps it was plucked by some happy lover, and given by him to his mistress as she sat in the window recess reading this 'last new novel.' And the pair may have wedded, and grown old together, and had children born to them, and seen them die, till at length the lady, aweary of the sun, turned her face to the wall in the bitterness of death, and passed from this world to the quiet land beyond. And the little flower has had a sort of immortality conferred upon it, and survives still to meet our eye, long after the hand which placed it there has become dust, the lips that kissed it been silenced by the clay, and the heart which prized it stilled in the calm of death.

Here is an old volume of quarto plays—many of them with the printer's errors corrected on the margin in a stiff Elizabethan hand. It may have been done by the drama-

tists themselves, giving the finishing touch to the pet products of their brain. What passion and life has been expended on these old books —what hours of midnight toil have gone to their making! and now they rest calmly enough upon the shelves; most of them undisturbed from year's end to year's end, some taken down now and then to verify a date or a quotation, only a very few with the slightest vital or human interest remaining. Surely it were a good sedative for any feverish aspirant after literary fame to be brought to this old library, and forced to spend a silent hour, faced by those quiet dust-clad volumes.

Yet books are not all dead—nay, they have in them a quite surprising vitality and power of life. Think for a moment on the marvel of that thing which we call a book. A sentence is lightly spoken, and the idle wind is ready to bear it away to the land of forgetfulness; but we write it down, and it is straightway immortal—oblivion is cheated of his due. We should rightly esteem it an inestimable privilege if we might listen daily to the common converse of great men. We should prize their lightest words, and store them carefully in our memory. But here we are admitted to the

fullest companionship with the greatest minds which the world has produced in every nation and period; and we hear, not their impulsive and ill-considered words, but the purest quintessence of their wisdom and experience. It is as though each author laid his hand upon his book and thus addressed us: 'Here I have said what I can say—here is the sum and significance of my life; this I would have remembered when all else about me is forgotten. In my life I said foolish words, and did some foolish deeds, but *here* I would be wise for you, and for posterity.' Kings will lay aside their royal robes, and become our teachers—saints will stoop from heaven to guide us on the way thither—and tempted sinners will confide to us their mortal hopes and fears, triumphs and falls. Men of science will patiently explain their discoveries; travellers will tell us of far distant lands; and poets will sing such songs as shall reveal to us our inner nature, and make the outer world blossom forth before our eyes in tenderer and more suggestive beauty. And so natural has this mode of instruction become to us, that we can all sympathise with Charles Lamb in his distrust of any future state where knowledge must come, 'if it come

at all, by some awkward experiment of intuition, and no longer by this familiar process of reading.'

Yet we read this book and that, and rise from their perusal much the same men as when we sat down. We may easily number on the fingers of one hand the names of those which have been of quite vital and sovereign power to us—which have changed for us the 'aspect of the earth and the imagery of heaven,' and made us feel

> 'Like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken.'

De Quincey has divided books into two classes—books of information and books of power. It is only works of the latter class which will have this effect. We may extract useful enough facts from dictionaries and directories, but only a book of power will give us a new world.

But, after all, we may live too much in the world of books, and forget that we were born, not into a library, but into God's world. We look out of the turret window; the sun is setting in a glorious agony of palpitating light, casting a ruddy glow over the village beneath. How fresh and youthful Nature is! Her

colours have not faded yet; they are as fresh to-night as they were on the creation evening. There is a man dying in a chamber down there, and there is more of pathos in the sight than in any tragedy we ever read. Two lovers are walking through the evening corn-fields, and their rapture has never found its way into a book. The children are shouting at play on the village green, and no lyric has ever caught half their gladness. The firmament which encircles the earth is wider than the walls of a library. Let us leave the library now, and walk forth into the world.

NOTES OF HOLIDAYS IN ARRAN

From *The Edinburgh Courant*, 17th August 1876

NOTES OF HOLIDAYS IN ARRAN

IN a former article we described a night spent with the Arran herring-fishers; in the present we intend giving an account of several of our expeditions in the island itself; and the first of which we shall speak is an ascent of Goatfell from Brodick to see the sunrise.

We had been sitting late over our supper, which was enlivened, if we remember rightly, with a few drops of *aqua vitæ*—for when in Rome we do as the Romans do. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning when two friends who had been supping with us rose to depart; but they had hardly put their noses into the outer air when they returned and insisted that we should start in a body to see the sunrise from Goatfell. Somewhat loath we equipped ourselves for the journey, but were quite reconciled to the expedition when we saw the lovely night and the splendour of the sky. To the right was the full moon shedding a broad band of glory over the water, while away to the left the sky was brightening into the delicatest

pinks and faintest yellows with the approaching dawn. So we walked steadily along the road, which we had found flat and commonplace enough in our often-repeated walks by day, but it was now made 'strange and new' by the unfamiliar light of blending night and morning. Then came a walk through a dark fir wood, among whose hollows the night lay black, the trees gathering together in a mysterious way, as though they were whispering among themselves about some secret of which we were quite ignorant. Next came a stretch through an open park full of half-awakened cattle, and with two or three great red obelisks marking the last resting-place of some prehistoric chieftains; then a stretch of pine forest again, and we were at the beginning of the ascent, standing among the heather and ferns, with the open sky above us and the grand hill in front, while far away the graceful form of a stag was seen on a ridge of the mountain relieved against the pallid morning sky. And now began a steady climb over the steep sloping ground, keeping by the side of the stream, which gradually dwindled in size as we ascended, and flowed over a clear, shallow bed composed chiefly of granite, which

was being gradually worn away and deposited at the bottom of the stream in a fine white powder. We soon reached the shoulder of the hill. By this time the mist had covered the summit; we felt its presence already, fifty or sixty yards more would have brought us into its midst; we were therefore obliged to resign all hope of a view from the top, but we were amply rewarded for our climb by what we saw from the elevation we reached. Away to the south was Ailsa Craig, looking wonderfully near; and nearer still was Brodick Bay, lying calm and placid between its encircling hills, with an unearthly look about it, seen in that strange morning light, like a white human face from which the holy hand of death has wiped away all trace of fret and disquiet. To obtain a view towards the east we had to climb a few steps farther, so as to overlook the ridge of the hill, and here we seated ourselves in a snug heathery corner of a rocky nook, perfectly sheltered from the cutting mist-chilled wind, and gathered close together for warmth. And from this cleft in the rock we saw the glory of the sunrise over the sea. Not ten feet from where we sat a sheer precipice ran eight hundred feet to the valley below, where

the slim slender thread of a stream was gliding away to the ocean. Into this valley, from our own level or higher, the wind was fiercely driving the mist, till it looked like smoke rained down from heaven. At the mouth of the valley were a few straggling cottages, a little harbour, and one solitary ship. Beyond the distant island of Bute, and the still more distant mainland and Highland mountains, the sun was rising in his strength, above one level band of clouds and then another, shedding a broad path of yellow brilliancy over the sea, which lay beneath utterly motionless but for a shiver which seemed to pass over its surface when a film of mist drifted between us and it —a great expanse of faint, blending purple and blue, which, in its crystalline purity, might have served Fra Angelico for a celestial pavement of glass mingled with fire, whereon to set the blessed feet of saints and redeemed ones. We satisfied our eyes upon the sight, or rather would have satisfied them, for in moments like this the eye cannot be filled with seeing. Then began the descent over the granite boulders and through the pasture and woodlands; and as we walked through the forest we saw the deer moving about with the

light dappling their dainty skins, not dim and far-distant like the one which we saw during our ascent, for the grey light of morning was now lost in the yellow sunlight which had flooded in like another subtler tide over the bay and the valleys :—

> 'The sweet land laughed from sea to sea
> Filled full of sun ;'

and another day had come with its call to labour and joy.

Our next walk up Goatfell was to see the sunset. We followed the same course as on the preceding expedition, till we reached the point where we had lain in the hollow of the rock and watched the sunrise ; thence we strode right upwards among the great grey boulders, and the luxuriant staghorn moss which clung around them. Gradually the vegetation grew sparser and sparser, and the immense naturally-piled masses of granite resembled a stone wall in their wonderful regularity, as though the mountain had been one of the last-held fortresses of some giant race of fallen Titans. A stiff climb brought us to the summit, and disclosed to us the gates of the west flashing with the intolerable radiance of a great ruddy sunset. First were seen the bold Arran hills,

Glen Rosa, and Glen Sannox lying between us and them; beyond, the illumined sea; then the remoter peaks of Jura and Mull; farther to the north the Highland mountains, and to the south-west the coast of Ireland. Turner might have hinted at the colours on canvas. After gazing long on the sight, we satisfied our thirst with a drink of rain-water which had collected in some cavities of the great stones which crowned the very summit of the mountain—in most literal truth, 'water out of the flinty rock.' Then we turned north-west, resolved to have a glimpse into Glen Sannox, to strike the 'Saddle,' as the ridge dividing that glen from Glen Rosa is called, and thence to proceed homewards by Glen Rosa. A few steps down the hill, and the brilliance of the sunset was hidden from us, and instead there was such a long dismal vista down a little nameless glen away seawards, all grey and gloomy—it looked in this light, or rather absence of light, like a dead land deserted of its god; but how the place would laugh out in sparkling colours, and how the ocean would ripple and glance for very joy when its god the Sun returned in splendour! Soon we gained the upper ridge of Glen

Sannox, and here had a very impressive glimpse into the valley below. It was through a long narrow cleft in the rock. Into this cleft a great mass of granite had fallen and firmly wedged itself, leaving beneath its lower surface an open space which disclosed a peep into the glen far beneath. The sudden surprise of the thing, and the sense of immense depth, reminded us forcibly of a similar effect in one of the *Liber Studiorum* prints, the *Mount St. Gothard*. After a rather precipitous climb we reached that portion of the 'Saddle' immediately between the two glens beforementioned. Here we lit our pipes and paused for a few moments to allow the impressiveness of the scene to sink deep into our memory and heart. To the north, looking over Glen Sannox, we had a glimpse of the distant islands set in the silver sea and bathed in the ruddy evening light. The dark hills immediately in front shut from our gaze the direct radiance of the sunset, their strong, clearly defined masses standing out a monochrome of dark purple against the clear sky of delicate blue, flecked with intense flame-coloured clouds, which mirrored themselves in two little pools among the dark rocks beneath,

and they in their turn answered the kiss of the heavens, and flushed up in quite a startling way, like two little pools of blood. And now came the finishing touch to the scene—the one living presence, to remind us by its isolation of the awful solitude of the place. An eagle rose from behind a dark peak, disappeared behind it for a moment, then again rose into view, floated majestically across the glen, its extended wings black against the sun-filled sky, and disappeared behind Goatfell. Soon the descent began down Glen Rosa. Far off we saw a herd of deer, led by a stag, crossing the Rosa Burn, and gracefully springing up the mountain side towards a wild, lonely corrie; and soon it required all our endeavours to keep the rough hill-path, for

> 'Hands unseen
> Were hanging the night around us fast,'

and the holy calm of darkness was descending upon the earth.

Before concluding these rambling notes we must say a word or two about that lovely little graveyard at Glen Sannox, which was the original, we believe, of Mr. Smart's impressive picture of the 'Graves o' our Ain Folk.' It lies just at the entrance of the glen, sufficiently

far from the dwellings of the living to have the most perfect solitude, the great mountains rising up on one side in the stony grandeur, and on the other spread out the great expanse of lifted sea. The place is luxuriant with lush, waving grass, and brilliant wild fuchsia. Some of the stones are very old, hardly raised above the earth level, and carved with cross-bones and skulls, and all the hideous things with which living men had expressed their fear of death. But the moss, russet and green, is filling the ghastly eyeholes of the death's-heads, and the rain is wearing down the tool-marks, and nature is doing her best to restore to the stones that calm which the sculptor's hand disturbed so rudely a hundred years ago. And we thought that if the dead were to return, having known the secrets, it might be that they would fully approve of Nature's quiet work; and, obliterating all the rude emblems, would carve cherub faces or palm-branches of victory in their stead. It was strange to read on the more modern stones such inscriptions as 'Lost at Sea,' 'Drowned in Corrie Harbour,' 'Drowned in the Clyde,' and then to raise the head and watch the ocean dreaming there in bluest depth of summer calm.

But these pleasant Arran days of ours soon came to a conclusion. 'Sweetest things have saddest ending,' says the poet. Our last day was wet and stormy, the island vanished from our eyes in a cloud of mist and rain, and these happy holidays became a thing of the past. But a thing of the past may be a very real possession still—sometimes more of a possession than when it was actually present; for in the haze of distance all that was unpleasant and marring vanishes from our eyes, and the scene or time shines forth with that perfect ideal beauty which the actual strove but imperfectly to express. If this is a law, it is of course true of the greatest as well as of the most trivial matters. Shakespeare says it is true about those friends who have left us, and some of us know in ourselves that he speaks the truth. Of the lover of Hero—she being dead as he supposes—the Friar in 'Much Ado about Nothing' says—

> 'The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
> Into his study of imagination,
> And every lovely organ of her life
> Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,
> More moving-delicate and full of life,
> *Into the eye and prospect of his soul,*
> Than when she lived indeed.'

REVIEW OF BROWNING'S PACCHIAROTTO

From *The Edinburgh Courant*, 4th Aug. 1876

REVIEW OF BROWNING'S PACCHIAROTTO

THE announcement some weeks ago, that a new volume of miscellaneous poems by Mr. Browning would be shortly published, excited expectations of no ordinary nature in the minds of such students of modern verse as consider that, among the many voices of poetic wisdom which are at present crying in the English market-places and at the street-corners, his is the most deserving of hearing and attention. It was felt that a volume of short poems would be more interesting than the longer works which he has recently put forth, and might afford a more decisive opportunity of comparison between the poet's powers in 1864, the date of *Dramatis Personæ*, and his powers at the present time. And now the book is before us.

'Pacchiarotto and How he Worked in Distemper,' is the poem from which the volume takes its name. It relates how an Italian

artist left the 'position in life to which God had called him,' abandoned his colours and brushes, 'took "reform" for his motto,' and chose for his future work the setting of the madly wandering globe upon its proper orbit again. But in order to judge of his chance of success in this modest little undertaking, he first constructs a grotto, paints its plastered sides with a great array of human beings in their typical characters of men and women, king, clown, pope, emperor, etc., and proceeds with much gusto to harangue this imaginary audience in order to habituate himself to public speaking, and to judge of the effect which he would produce when he addressed living men. All, of course, goes well in his dealings with the painted figures, and nothing now remains but an opportunity to commence business as public reformer. The opportunity soon came, for a famine fell on Siena, our hero's town. He repairs to a meeting of a club called the 'Freed Ones, *Bardotti*,' a word meaning the 'spare horses' of the social team, a society who themselves 'had opinions,' and felt quite equal to put the world all right again. And this was their recipe for the cure of this sick, distempered world—

'"Just substitute servant for master,
Make Poverty Wealth, and Wealth Poverty,
Unloose man from overt and covert tie,
And straight out of social confusion
True Order would spring!" Brave illusion,
Aims heavenly attained by means earthly.'

And with this sapient society Pacchiarotto's labours begin and end. He mounts the rostrum and harangues his select audience, the gist of his speech being that all would go well with Siena and the world if they only knew what to do, if—

'"Ye did—as ye might—place
For once the right man in the right place:
If you listened to me."
At which last "if"
There sprang to his throat like a mastiff,
One "Spare Horse"—another and another.
Such outbreak of turmoil and potter,
Horse faces a-laughing and fleering,
Horse voices a-mocking and jeering,
Horse hands raised to collar the caitiff
Whose impudence ventured the late "if."'

O Pacchiarotto, Pacchiarotto, thou would-be shepherd of the social flock, truly 'thou art in parlous state,' and this treatment you have received from the *illuminati* of the place—those upon whom the day-star of better coming things had risen—not from the mere vulgar multitude at all. He flees for very life, reaches an old

tomb, lies *perdu* therein for two days, and at length emerges a sorry object, 'starved back to sanity,' and repairs to a convent. Here the worthy worldly Superior, who has outlived all his youthful enthusiasms, who has grown accustomed and reconciled to his worldly surroundings, whose soul, like the dyer's hand, is subdued to what it works in—this Superior gravely admonishes the hare-brained poet in a speech which contains the moral of the whole—

'Let tongue rest and quiet thy quill be!
Earth is earth, and not heaven, and ne'er will be.
Man's work is to labour and leaven—
As best he may—earth here with heaven.
'Tis work for work's sake he 's needing.
Let him work on and on as if speeding
Work's end, but not dream of succeeding;
Because if success were intended,
Why, heaven would begin ere earth ended.
. . . . . .
All's for an hour of essaying
Who 's fit and who 's unfit for playing
His part in the after-construction—
Heaven's piece whereof earth 's the Induction.
Things rarely go smooth at Rehearsal—
Wait patient the change universal,
And act, and let act, in existence.'

That is to say, in this world a man must be content in just doing his own ordinary part honestly, calmly, and quietly; must not fuss and fret himself too much about results, nor

dream that his puny efforts will remedy all abuses, nor be unduly anxious to see the seed which he has planted ripening, or the acorn which he has cast into the earth standing an oak in the sunshine. Then, having finished Pacchiarotto and his story, the author favours his critics with a few words which amount to this—'Well, I, "Robert Browning, writer of plays," have here given up the puzzling mental analysis which you so much object to, and have told our friend's story in shortest, curtest words. I trust you are satisfied; but, by your leave, I mean, for my own part, to take my own way, and please myself, not you.' It seems difficult to avoid feeling that there is a covert reference in the poem to the recent developments of a great art critic, who has to some extent abandoned his 'natural vocation,' and turned aside to political economy and the regeneration of the world. May the poem be regarded as the verdict of Mr. Browning on the recent efforts of Mr. Ruskin—efforts which we know from a chance reference in the 'Inn Album' have been watched by the poet with that clear-eyed scrutiny which he seems to give to all history, social and political alike? A word on the rhythm of the poem.

In a work like Wordsworth's famous 'Ode,' any reader can recognise the suitability of the measure to the subject, can feel how the ordered words flow and pause, leap and then hesitate in harmony with the thought which they express; but some may hardly feel that the roughshod Skelton-like measure of 'Pacchiarotto'

> 'Begun with a chuckle,
> And throughout timed by raps on the knuckle,'

is good art; yet in reality it is, and its author is a consummate artist. The rough-and-ready ordering of the words is most exactly suited to the rough-and-ready humour and practical wisdom which the words embody. The expression of such thoughts in the perfectly polished verse of say the 'Earthly Paradise' would be absurd; when the author sings of the death of 'Evelyn Hope' he can be softly melodious enough in all conscience.

Passing to the other poems, we find many of them full of railing at the critics, and to our mind this is the most disagreeable feature of the book. The railing is, of course, done in the most good-humoured and offhand way—half-jocular at least; yet through all we seem to perceive some trace of annoyance and dis-

turbed feeling. But a man who has produced such work as Mr. Browning's should surely know the value of that work, and ought therefore to dwell in an atmosphere of unruffled, calm, and pure serene, far above the fret and stir of that dim spot where carking critics abide. He should surely feel something of that calm which guided Albert Durer's pen when he wrote laconically to a friend who had found fault with a picture of his, 'Sir, it cannot be better done.' On the whole, the poems are still more subjective—to use a cant phrase—than any of the author's previous works—though even these were never 'landscapes with figures,' but had always the human interest paramount. In previous works he has given us just enough background of nature to 'place' and explain the actions and feelings of the actors; in much of the present volume human feelings only are dealt with, apart altogether from either human action or natural surrounding. Of this class are 'Shop,' 'Pizgah Sights,' 'Fears and Scruples,' the last being specially noteworthy and admirable; and in the midst of these is introduced with fine effect the ballad of 'Hervé Riel,' which deals simply with brave

human action—a poem having in it the smell of the sea and the freedom of open air. In 'A Forgiveness' we have the story of a politician, calm and steadfast, his reticent nature hiding vast gulfs of love and of passion. His wife fancies that he neglects her, immersed in his state-craft, and he becomes aware that she is unfaithful. For three years they live together, to the public eye the same as before, yet ice-cold at heart to each other, till at length the wife can bear it no longer, but slays herself in her husband's sight. In the poem he is relating the story at confessional; the confessor is the betrayer of his wife; he knows it, and in the end springs at his throat. 'A sensational story,' says the reader. Yes; but not a sensational *poem*; for when the facts have been mingled with the poet's feeling—the poet's heart-blood—and thus through divine alchemy have been transformed into a poem, all that is merely horrible, and therefore vulgar and debasing, vanishes, and only pure soul-purging terror remains. If we remember rightly, there are some rather sensational elements in Shakespeare—murders, suicides, and worse—but we don't call his plays sensational. A work of

art is sensational only when its chief interest centres in such incidents, not when such incidents are used for the exhibition of exceptionally great displays of character and passion. The fact is, that Shakespeare knew, and Browning knows, just as well, that the tame level of ordinary life is not the fittest stage for the exhibition of the greatest art; that high and exceptional situations produce high thoughts, high feelings, high poems; and that a peculiar disposition of both pebble and sun—of both soul and circumstance—is required in order that the stone may flash forth with that sharpest brilliance which at all times lies hidden within it. In the 'Epilogue' there is the following affecting little reference to the poet's wife — that sweetest of woman-singers, that 'Lyric Love,' whose spirit-form the author has once or twice in his poems touched with so tender, so reverent a finger:—

> '"The poets pour us wine,"
> Said the dearest poet I ever knew,
> Dearest and greatest, and best to me.'

We shall conclude with a short poem which admirably exemplifies that quality of freshness and originality which characterises this

volume, and, indeed, all true poetry; for each true poem is a kind of 'sweet surprise,' seems quite impossible till we have seen it, quite natural and inevitable when we have seen it, is like that flower which they say grew in the holy Campo Santo earth of Pisa—'in that place there came up a wondrous flower, the like whereof had never been seen on this earth before.' In the poem which we shall quote a lover asks whereunto shall he liken his lady? To the fair, frail loveliness of vegetable existence? No; but to the fiery faithfulness and enduring steadfastness of a precious stone.

I.

'Flower—I never fancied, jewel—I profess you!
Bright I see and soft I feel the outside of a flower.
Save but glow inside and—jewel I should guess you
Dim to sight and rough to touch, the glory is the dower.

II.

You, forsooth, a flower? Nay, my love, a jewel—
Jewel, at no mercy of a moment in your prime!
Time may fray the flower-face: kind be time or cruel,
Jewel, from each facet flash your laugh at time.'

Let any one read this poem aloud, and he will never after doubt whether Mr. Browning can, or cannot, write melodious verse.

OBITUARY OF JOHN BROWN, M.D.

From *The Academy*, 20th May 1882

OBITUARY OF JOHN BROWN, M.D.

THE news of the death of the author of *Rab and his Friends* will come as a painful shock to a singularly wide circle of personal friends, and to the yet wider circle of readers, both in this country and abroad, who knew him only through his genial and delightful writings. Though Dr. Brown was an old man, and his health had been for many years feeble and uncertain, it seemed as if he had entered on a period of peaceful and productive evening quiet. He was relieved from the greater part of his professional duties, and had returned to literary work which had been long discontinued, preparing for the press the collected edition of his works recently issued, and writing a Preface to a series of calotype portraits to be shortly published—a task for which he was specially qualified by his interest in art and his comprehensive knowledge of the Scottish society of the last generation. A few

days ago he caught cold. At first no danger was apprehended, but congestion of the lungs set in, his enfeebled frame speedily succumbed, and he passed from us on the morning of the 11th inst.

Dr. Brown was born at Biggar on September 22, 1810, the descendant of a long line of Secession clergymen who were well known and greatly respected in Scotland. His father removed to Edinburgh, where he was long the esteemed and eloquent minister of Broughton Place Church. The son was educated at the High School and University; and after serving an apprenticeship with Mr., afterwards Professor, Syme, his attached and life-long friend, he spent a year as an assistant surgeon at Chatham. There is an anecdote connected with this period which is worth preserving. Many years afterwards Dr. Brown met Charles Dickens for the first and, I think, the only time. The conversation turned on nationalities, and Dickens said that he had been cured of any Cockney prejudice against Scotsmen which he might have had by the heroic conduct of a young Scottish surgeon which he had witnessed at Chatham during the cholera time. Strange to say, this young

surgeon was none other than the friend to whom he was telling the story. Returning to Edinburgh in 1833, Dr. Brown graduated as M.D., and began to practise as a physician. His leisure was occupied with literature. The history of the touching little tale with which his name is always associated is a curious one. He had been asked to give a lecture to a country audience, the congregation of a clerical friend. He recalled a memory of his student days, and embodied it, no doubt with this and that touch of 'added artistry,' in a little story, which was written at speed through one brief midsummer night—much as we have been recently told Rossetti wrote his *Hand and Soul*—and read somewhat nervously and ineffectively to his rustic listeners, upon whom it fell strangely flat. It was only when published that the story obtained immediate recognition as one of the most perfect and pathetic of modern tales, going directly to the hearts of all classes of readers, and attaining a well-nigh unparalleled number of editions. Along with his kinsmen, Dr. Samuel Brown, the chemist, and Mr. John Taylor Brown, Dr. Brown was a contributor to the *North British Review*. Such of his articles as 'A

Jacobite Family,' 'Arthur Hallam,' and the inimitable 'Marjorie Fleming' were collected in 1858 and 1861 in the *Horae Subsecivae* volumes, along with various character-studies of medical worthies which first appeared in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*; but one remarkable contribution to the *North British* is still to be found only in its columns—an able and eloquent review of the first volumes of *Modern Painters*, the first important public recognition which the work received.

Like Landor, Dr. Brown 'loved first nature' —human nature—'and after nature art.' Next in value to his studies of humanity and its environments are those which deal with the painter's reflections of them. Among such papers are the essays on Leech and Raeburn and the more fragmentary 'Notes on Art' selected from the reviews of the Scottish Academy's exhibitions contributed to the *Witness* newspaper in 1846 at the request of Hugh Miller, its editor. They are full of vital and sympathetic insight, and are brightened by the playful fancy and genial humour which characterise all Dr. Brown's writings, shining, as in the works of all the truest and profoundest humorists, against a background of

sadness, and never flippant or frivolous, for always

> 'The root of some grave, earnest thought is understruck so rightly
> As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.'

They give little prominence to the technicalities of art, though their author was by no means ignorant of these, for he lived in close intimacy with many painters, had studied for at least a short time under J. W. Ewbank, R.S.A.; and his rough pen-and-ink sketches, like the two reproduced in *Our Dogs*, are full of perception and character. It was greatly to be desired that Dr. Brown should have given us a critical estimate of his friend the late Sir George Harvey, P.R.S.A., but his sense of loss on the artist's death was too profound and poignant to admit of this.

The writings of Dr. Brown were the spontaneous outcome of his nature, and their tenderness and sympathy, their insight and humour, were the characteristics of his own individuality. There was a strange and winning charm about him which made itself constantly felt, and attracted to him all with whom he came into contact. In his prime he

was a brilliant conversationalist; and even to those of us who knew him only in later life, and were permitted to spend many hours with him in the little smoking-room at the top of his house, the memory of these evenings, and of him who made them bright with his mirth and genial wisdom, will be preserved for ever as a treasured possession.

REVIEW OF SHARP'S ROSSETTI

From *The Academy*, 6th January 1883

REVIEW OF SHARP'S ROSSETTI

IT is but nine months since the death of Rossetti, and already two important volumes dealing with his life and works have been placed in our hands. Both will be welcome to the admirers of the great painter-poet, for each occupies its own distinct field of investigation. As its title indicates, Mr. Caine's volume dealt mainly with the personal aspects of its subject, recording the author's intercourse with Rossetti, and deriving much of its exceeding interest from the liberal quotations which it contained from the letters written during the three years which preceded the meeting of Mr. Caine with Rossetti, and that residence with him which ensued and did so much to cheer the last months of the artist's life. The correspondence, confined rather exclusively to questions of art and literature, has a singular value; and it was supplemented by such a general account of Rossetti's works in painting and poetry as was

necessary to give some degree of completeness to the sketch.

Mr. Sharp, however, has set before himself a wider aim. His volume claims to be 'A Record and a Study' of Rossetti. His first forty pages are occupied with a concise and excellent biography; but during the rest of the book he holds the personal element strictly in abeyance, and views his subject through the medium of his poetic and pictorial accomplishments, though of course adding to the view thus obtained the results of such side-glimpses as intimacy and friendship have afforded him.

The second chapter deals in an interesting and penetrative way with the 'Pre-Raphaelite Idea,' giving liberal extracts from the *Germ*, and a general synopsis of its contents which will be greatly valued by many readers to whom the four numbers of this very scarce little magazine are inaccessible. Then 'Rossetti the Artist' is considered; a very full and detailed account of his book-illustrations, designs, and paintings is accompanied by appreciative and justly critical remarks on the characteristics and general tendencies of his art. This is followed by a chapter on Ros-

setti's prose works, such as *Hand and Soul* —a tale which Mr. Sharp justly parallels with Mr. Pater's exquisitely imaginative sketch of *The Child in the House*—and the critical papers, on Dr. Hake's poems and the Fraser Portraits of Maclise, which appeared in the *Academy*. The rest of the volume is occupied with the poetry of Rossetti. It is especially interesting for its comparison of the changes from first readings made in the later editions of many of the pieces, and for its publication of some fine but cancelled passages, like the following, which originally stood as the eighth stanza of 'Love's Nocturn:'—

> 'As since man waxed deathly wise,
> Secret somewhere on this earth
> Unpermitted Eden lies—
> Thus within the world's wide girth
> Hides she from my spirit's dearth
> Paradise
> Of a love that cries for death.'

Not less admirable than the fulness and accuracy of the 'Record' of Rossetti's work is the fairness and critical acumen of the 'Study.' It might have been expected that a young author like Mr. Sharp, brought into such close intercourse with a personality so magnetic and fascinating as that of Rossetti, might have

been overmastered by it, might have come to see the world of art and literature through the eyes of his gifted friend; and when the time arrived for him to write regarding the work of this friend, his tone might have been one of unmixed laudation. But Mr. Sharp's former volume, *The Human Inheritance, and other Poems*, gave us hope of better things, for it showed no noticeable trace of the influence of Rosetti's verse, and proved that the author had been able to maintain his poetic individuality. And now he writes in a spirit distinctly critical and impersonal regarding his dead friend and his work, and shows them he is well aware of the faults which mingled with the greatness of his subject; of the faults of draughtsmanship, for instance, which are characteristic of his pictorial art; and of that hopelessness which is the predominant note of his poetry, marring the influence of his song, and disclosing some radical warp and weakness in the singer himself.

We may take exception to this and that isolated expression throughout Mr. Sharp's volume. We may hesitate to consider Rossetti as '*at least* equalling the great Venetian colourists,' and feel as little disposed to parallel

his place in English art with that of Turner as we should be to assign to him that seat in English literature 'not far from Shakespeare's self' which certain enthusiastic admirers claim as his due. We may feel that the modern surroundings of his 'Lilith' rather strike a discord in the conception of the legendary enchantress than heighten its symbolic and imaginative impressiveness; and, remembering 'The Blessed Damozel,' 'The Last Confession,' and 'Dante at Verona,' we may doubt as to the supremacy claimed at p. 357 for 'Sister Helen' and 'The King's Tragedy.' But in the main scope of the volume, with Mr. Sharp's general estimate of Rossetti's work, and indeed with most of his detailed criticism, we can gladly and gratefully agree.

Regarding the style of the book, we must notice that it contains a quite undue proportion of irritating little verbal inaccuracies. There is a persistent awkwardness in the placing of the adverb; and sentences like the following are far too frequent: 'In the painting of the same subject belonging to Mr. Graham . . . the face and attitude are alike somewhat different;' 'but his health was not now equal to what it was'—for 'had been.'

These, and such as these, by no means prove the author's inability to write accurate English, for the more important parts of the book are correct and even excellent in style, the accounts of the various pictures, for example, being not only definitely and clearly descriptive, but occasionally touched with impassioned eloquence. The errors that we have indicated simply show that Mr. Sharp's proof-sheets have not received a thorough and searching revision, an omission probably to be accounted for by the speed necessary in the production of the volume. It was eminently desirable that the book should be in the hands of its readers before the opening of the Rossetti displays at the Royal Academy and the Burlington Club; and it is no bad augury for the future of a young writer that he has devoted his main effort, during the limited time at his disposal, rather to the collection of reliable and significant facts than to the polishing and perfecting of his sentences. The care and labour involved in the compilation of that annotated catalogue of nearly four hundred pictures and sketches which occupies the last pages of the volume will be duly appreciated only by such readers as have

themselves attempted some similar undertaking.

One of Rossetti's latest drawings, the 'Design for the Sonnet,' transcribed in a most delicate wood-engraving, by the hand of Mr. H. Linton, if we mistake not, forms a singularly appropriate frontispiece to a volume dealing with the double artistic life of the poet-painter, and a valuable addition to the very few of his designs which have been published. Perhaps we might have chosen in preference a purely mediæval subject had the object been simply to give an example of what was most distinctive in the art of Rossetti. But the present design, while marking in a most happy way the two sides of his artistic nature, is also illustrative of several of the general characteristics of his pictorial work—of its gravity, for instance, and imaginative impressiveness; while the fourteen-stringed lyre, the winged sand-glass, and the split coin indicate his habitual use of symbolism; the involved twigs and leafage, his love of intricate and detailed decoration; and, it must be confessed, the throat and shoulders of the figure hint at his frequently imperfect draughtsmanship.

HAND SICKER
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